







# The nausea of being

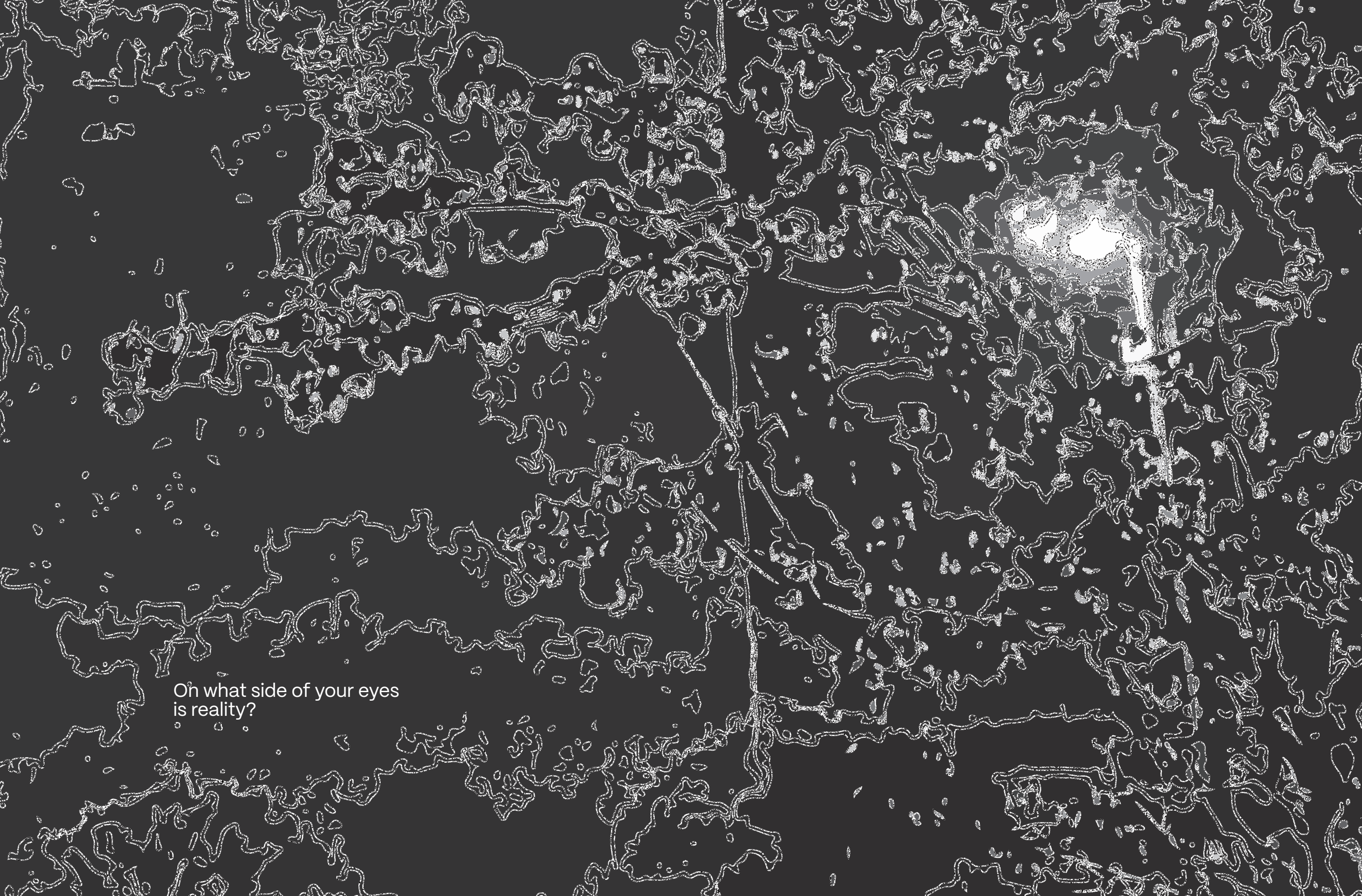
Marie Bally



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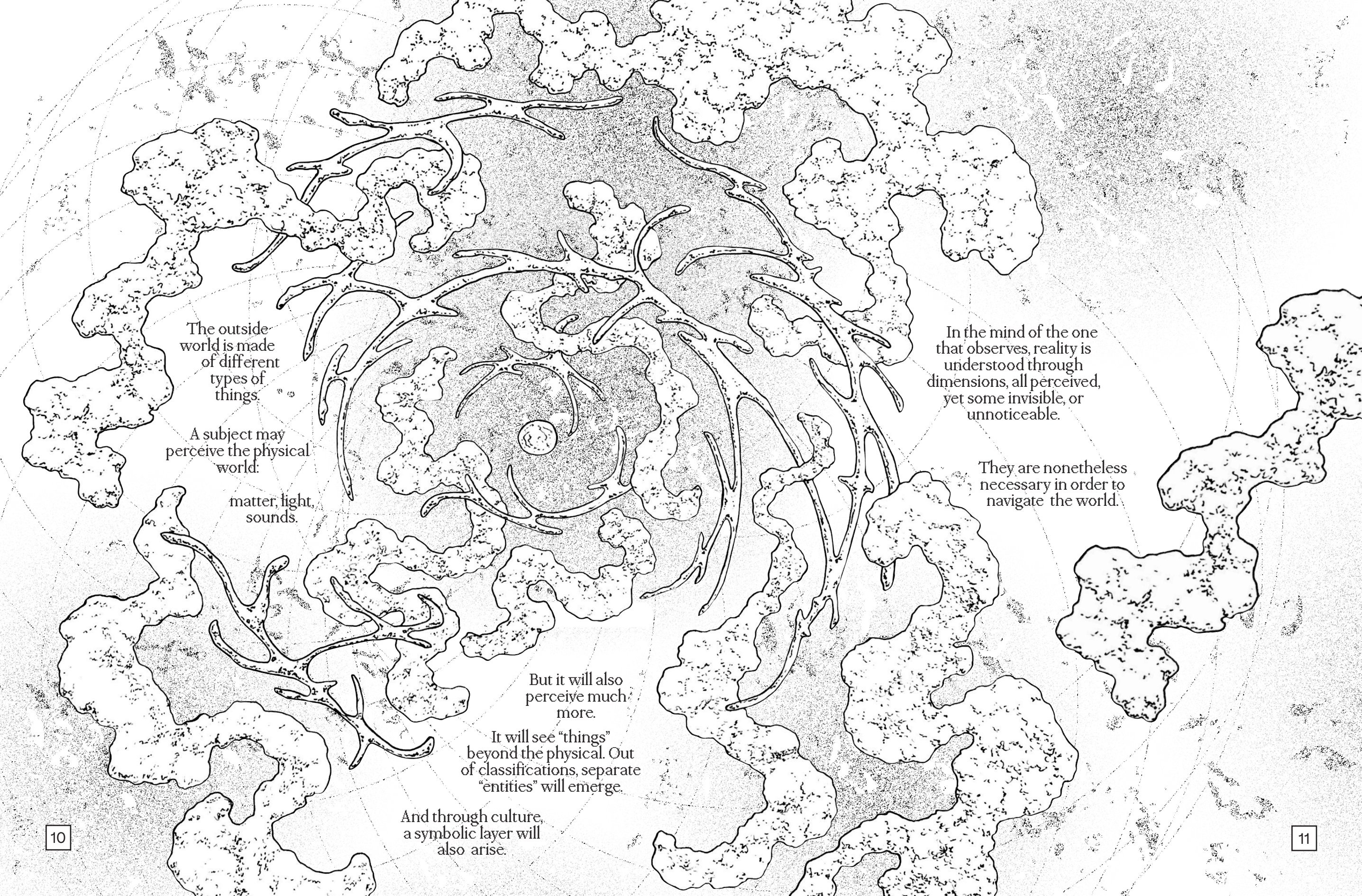
On what side of your eyes  
is reality?



# Perception: the real and unreal







The outside world is made of different types of things.

A subject may perceive the physical world:

matter, light, sounds.

But it will also perceive much more.

It will see "things" beyond the physical. Out of classifications, separate "entities" will emerge.

And through culture, a symbolic layer will also arise.

In the mind of the one that observes, reality is understood through dimensions, all perceived, yet some invisible, or unnoticeable.

They are nonetheless necessary in order to navigate the world.



This is how  
by perceiving  
what is in their  
hands,

in order to form  
an understanding  
of it.

one will perceive  
it not only as an  
amalgamation

through the  
observation of  
whatever thing they  
have in front of  
their eyes,

of paper, ink  
and threads,

All these  
dimensions will  
layer each other

but also as an  
object, as a book, and  
above that, a transmitter of  
information through  
written language.



I realised that I'm  
constantly navigating  
a world of realness  
and unrealness.

What "exists"  
is a tight knit of the  
"objective" and the  
imaginary.

Sometimes  
it makes me feel  
uneasy.

The physical  
and the immaterial  
are so  
interconnected,  
and I used to naively  
think the outside  
world was  
just "out  
there",

that things  
simply "were", that and  
that I could somehow  
see them as they  
are (foolish of me).

I am not scared of the  
giant worm appearing in  
concrete holes,  
only because I  
classify it as a "metro"  
with certain rules  
and a certain  
understanding of  
the phenomenon.

But it's  
almost like there's  
a part of me that  
occasionally  
disconnects  
from the current  
codes of my  
surroundings,  
and all the normal  
things suddenly seem  
so grotesque.



It's only until my mental  
models began to crash that  
I started to notice how  
shaky our understanding  
of the world is.  
How fluid, intangible  
most of it is.

Whatever trace of  
"real" is left in what I  
sense, is overthrown  
by its own meta/hyper  
realness.

It's like the world is made  
of mysterious phantoms.  
Abstract concepts fill up  
my reality,

and through them I  
weave in my own emotions,  
judgements, projections,  
to the point that their  
"representation" is almost  
more important than the  
thing itself.



In order for "thingness" to emerge, it needs delimitations – even more, it arises from delimitations.

The "essence" of a thing is only how it differs from everything else in a systematic way. For a thing to "be", it comes from a difference, and a separation. So the limits form a thing, before its own "essence" is created.

In a way, the "core" of anything lies in its edges more than its center. In the same way that the negative space creates the contours of a shape

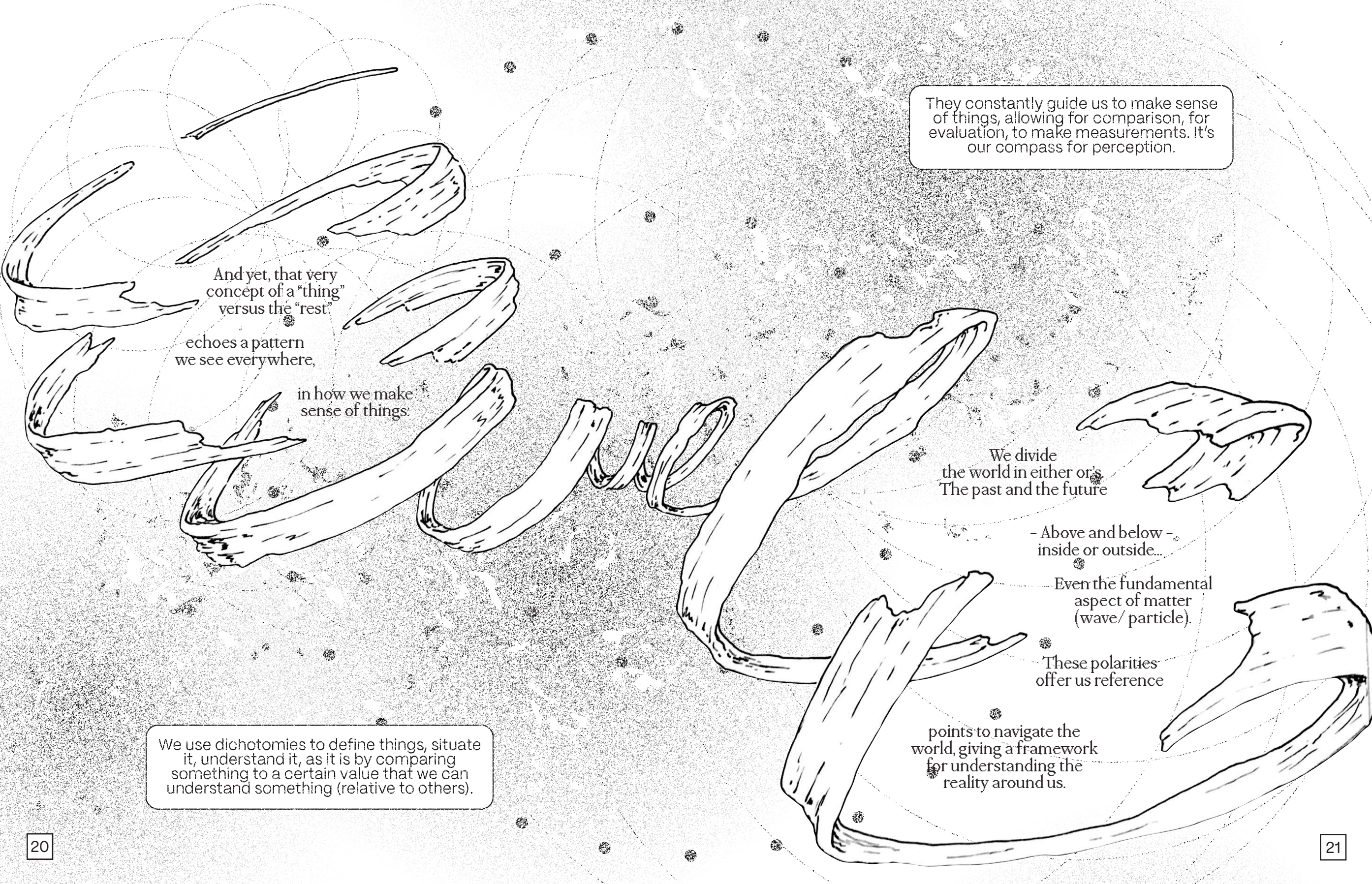
Parallellly, or ironically, there is infinity in the border itself. It is strangely paired with the concept of a limit. Like the infinite divisibility in Zeno's paradox.

So the limits are what creates ugh?

A "thing" starts where another ends, separation birthes creation. It sounds a bit ironic don't you think? Or like a cheesy "aha" moment at the end of a bad movie. Almost like a rebranded Ouroboros.

fig.2





They constantly guide us to make sense of things, allowing for comparison, for evaluation, to make measurements. It's our compass for perception.

And yet, that very concept of a "thing" versus the "rest" echoes a pattern we see everywhere, in how we make sense of things.

We use dichotomies to define things, situate it, understand it, as it is by comparing something to a certain value that we can understand something (relative to others).

We divide the world in either or's  
The past and the future

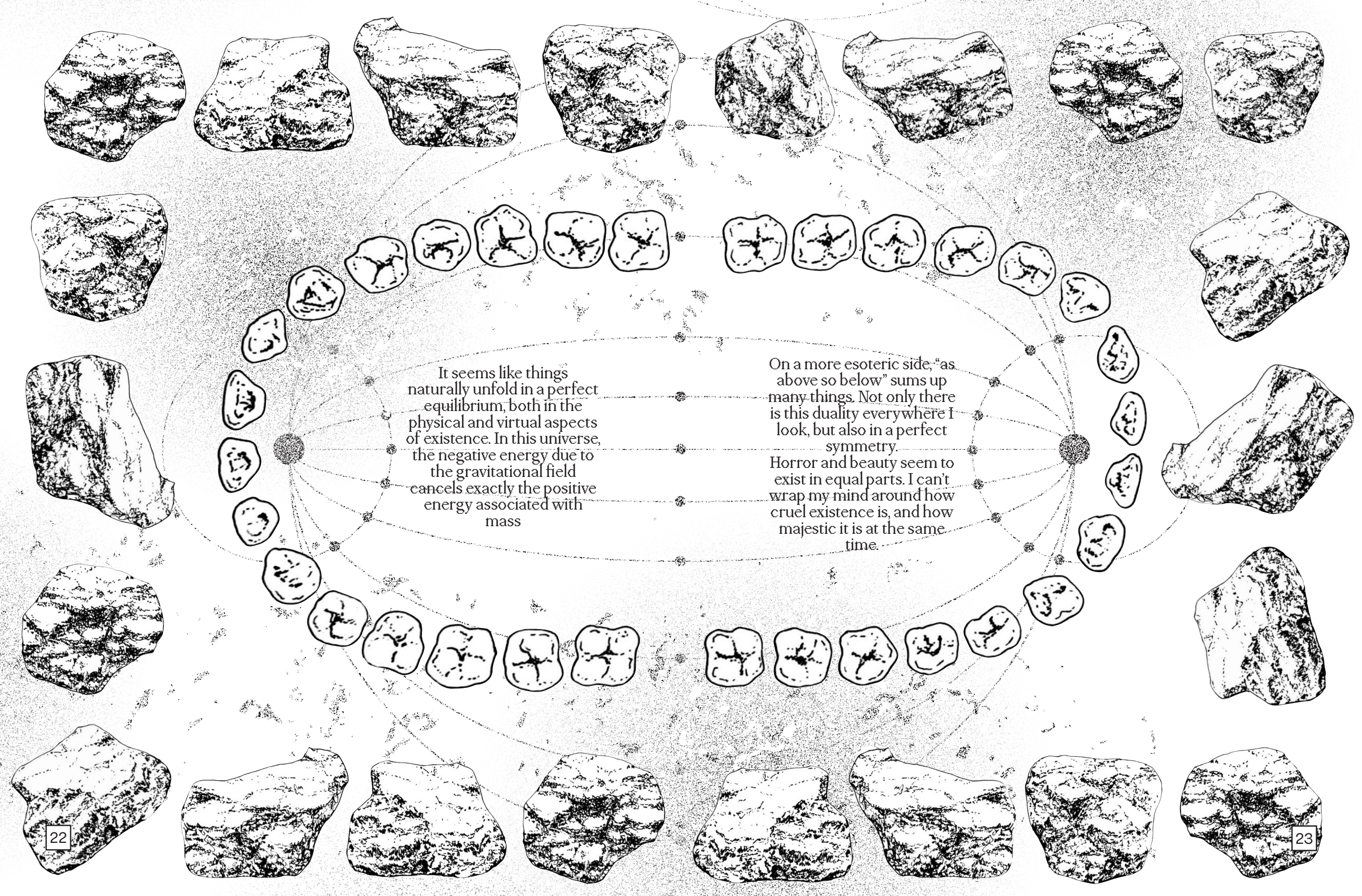
- Above and below -  
inside or outside...

Even the fundamental aspect of matter (wave/ particle).

These polarities offer us reference

points to navigate the world, giving a framework for understanding the reality around us.



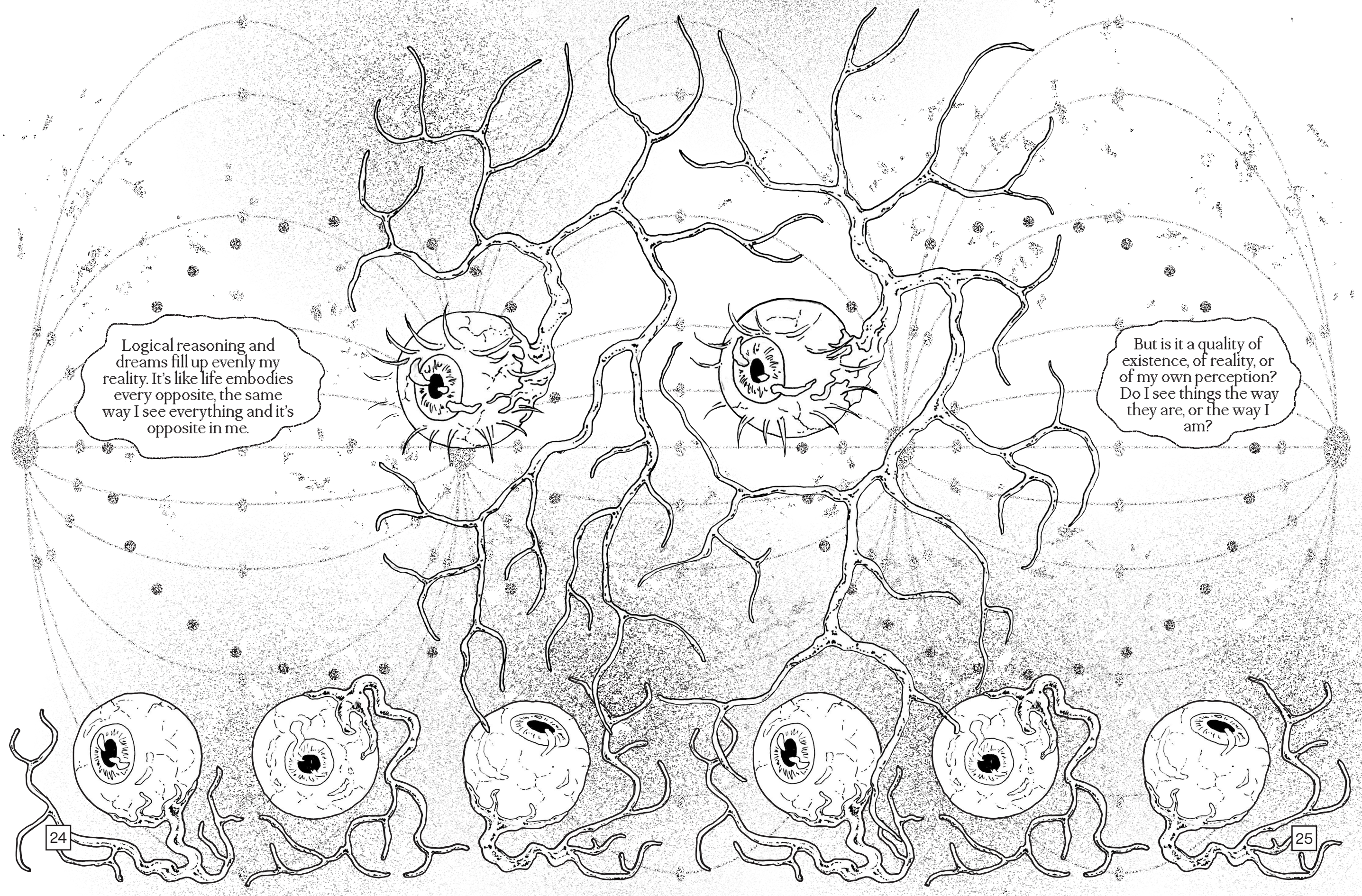


It seems like things naturally unfold in a perfect equilibrium, both in the physical and virtual aspects of existence. In this universe, the negative energy due to the gravitational field cancels exactly the positive energy associated with mass

On a more esoteric side, "as above so below" sums up many things. Not only there is this duality everywhere I look, but also in a perfect symmetry.

Horror and beauty seem to exist in equal parts. I can't wrap my mind around how cruel existence is, and how majestic it is at the same time.

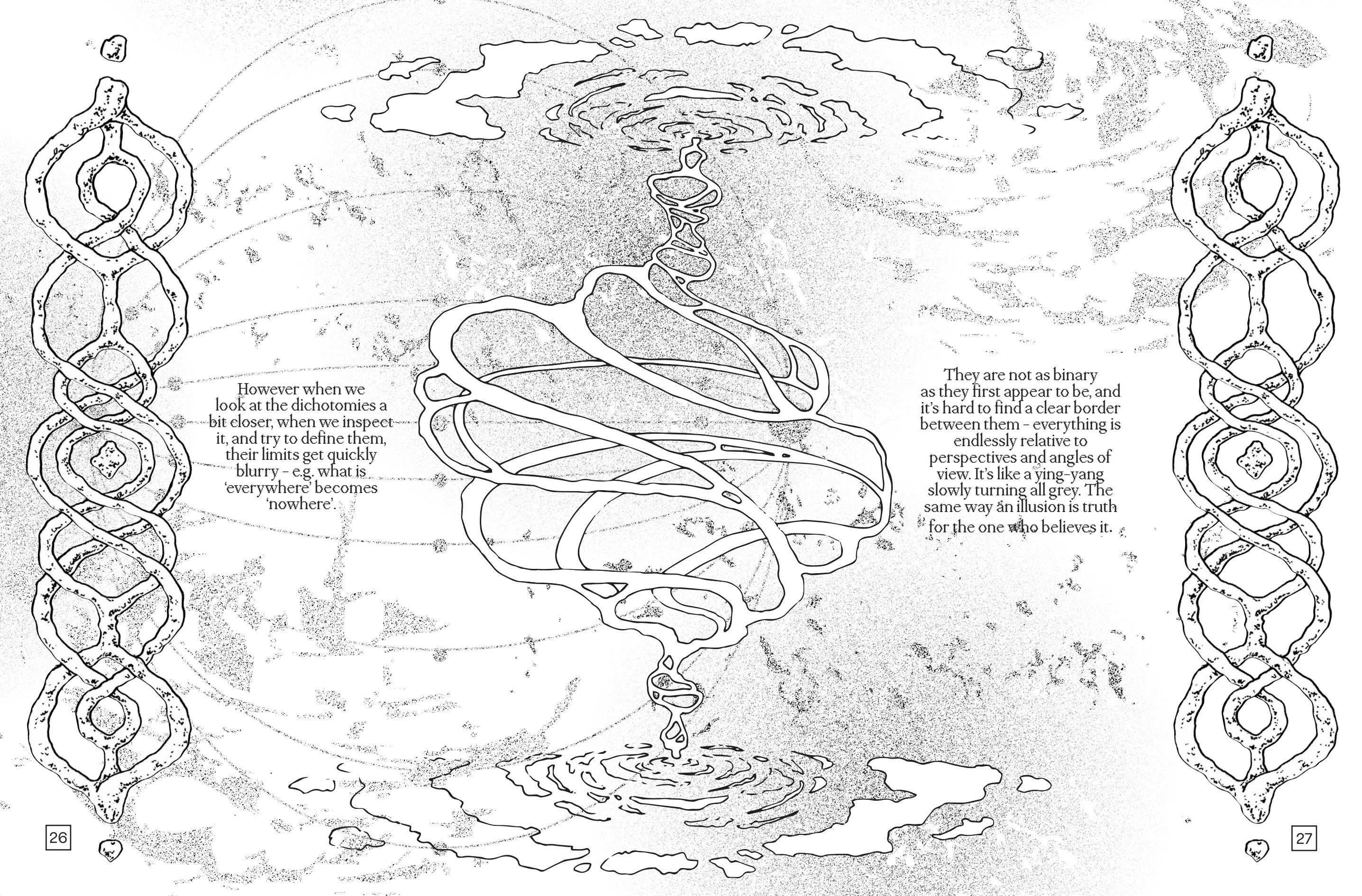




Logical reasoning and  
dreams fill up evenly my  
reality. It's like life embodies  
every opposite, the same  
way I see everything and it's  
opposite in me.

But is it a quality of  
existence, of reality, or  
of my own perception?  
Do I see things the way  
they are, or the way I  
am?

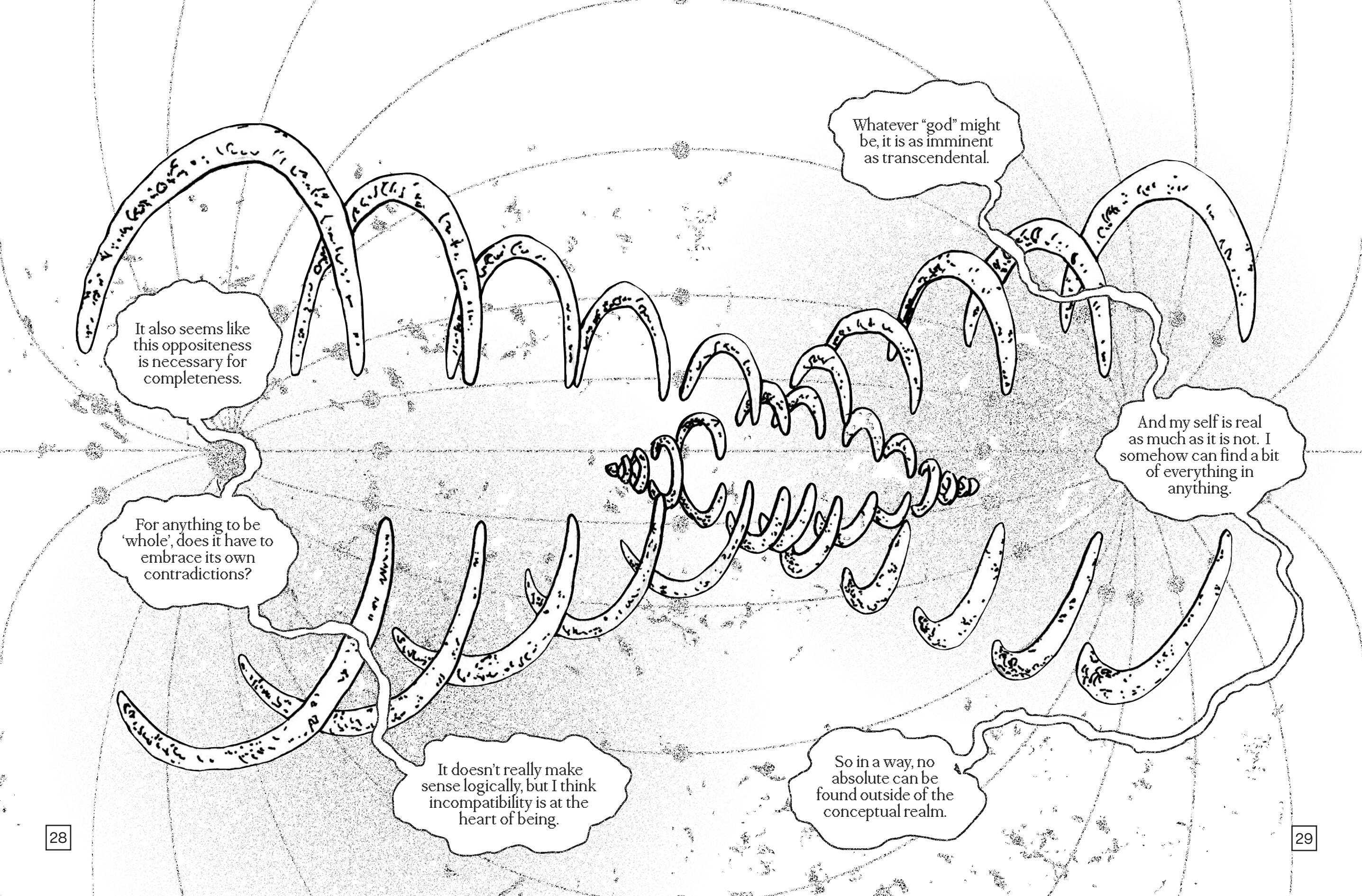




However when we  
look at the dichotomies a  
bit closer, when we inspect  
it, and try to define them,  
their limits get quickly  
blurry - e.g. what is  
'everywhere' becomes  
'nowhere'.

They are not as binary  
as they first appear to be, and  
it's hard to find a clear border  
between them - everything is  
endlessly relative to  
perspectives and angles of  
view. It's like a ying-yang  
slowly turning all grey. The  
same way an illusion is truth  
for the one who believes it.





It also seems like  
this oppositeness  
is necessary for  
completeness.

Whatever "god" might  
be, it is as imminent  
as transcendental.

And my self is real  
as much as it is not. I  
somehow can find a bit  
of everything in  
anything.

For anything to be  
'whole', does it have to  
embrace its own  
contradictions?

It doesn't really make  
sense logically, but I think  
incompatibility is at the  
heart of being.

So in a way, no  
absolute can be  
found outside of the  
conceptual realm.



Almost like a torus field,  
polarities constantly turn into  
each other, which makes me  
question how much each of these  
dichotomies make sense outside  
of a human conscious mind.

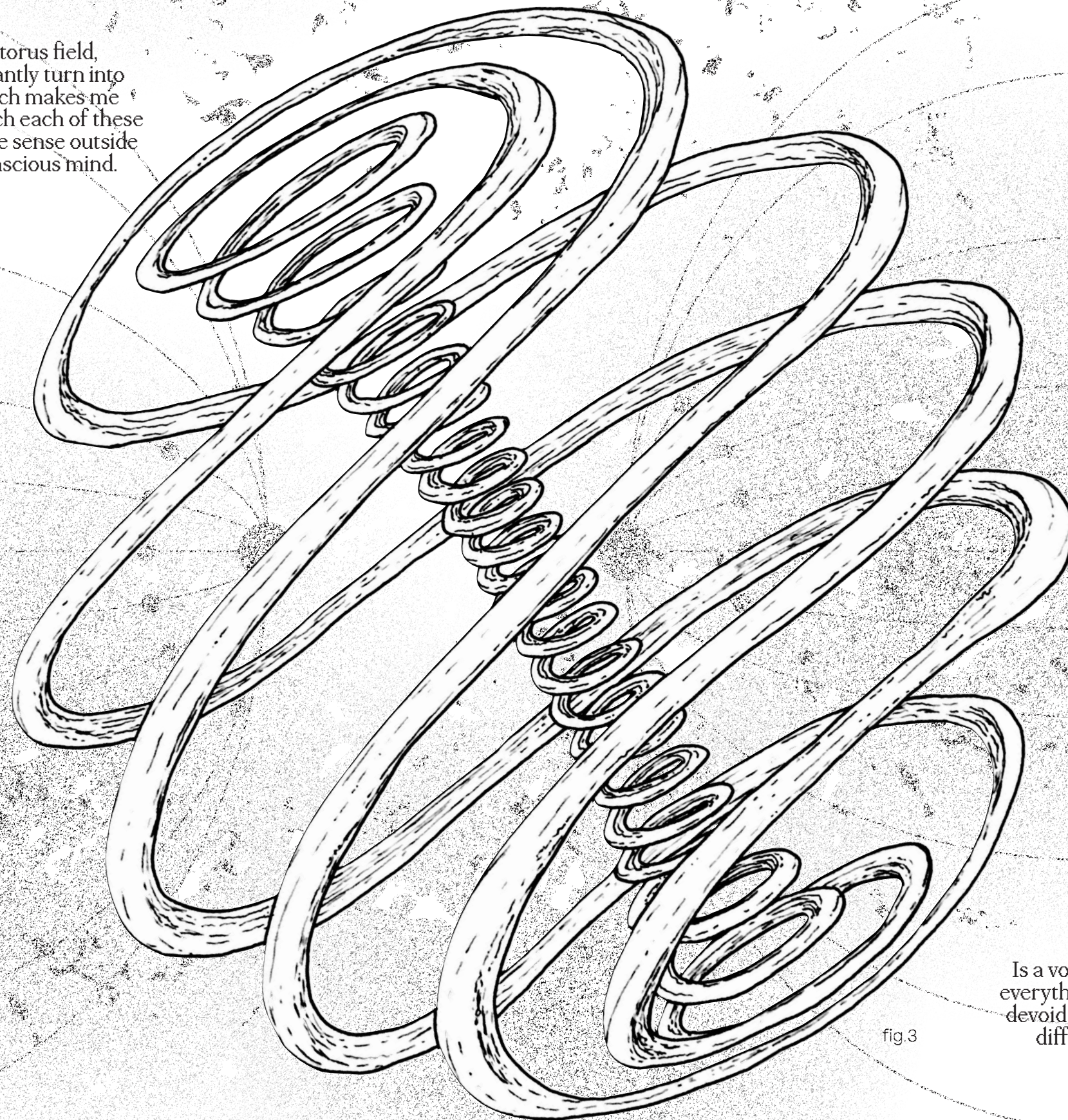
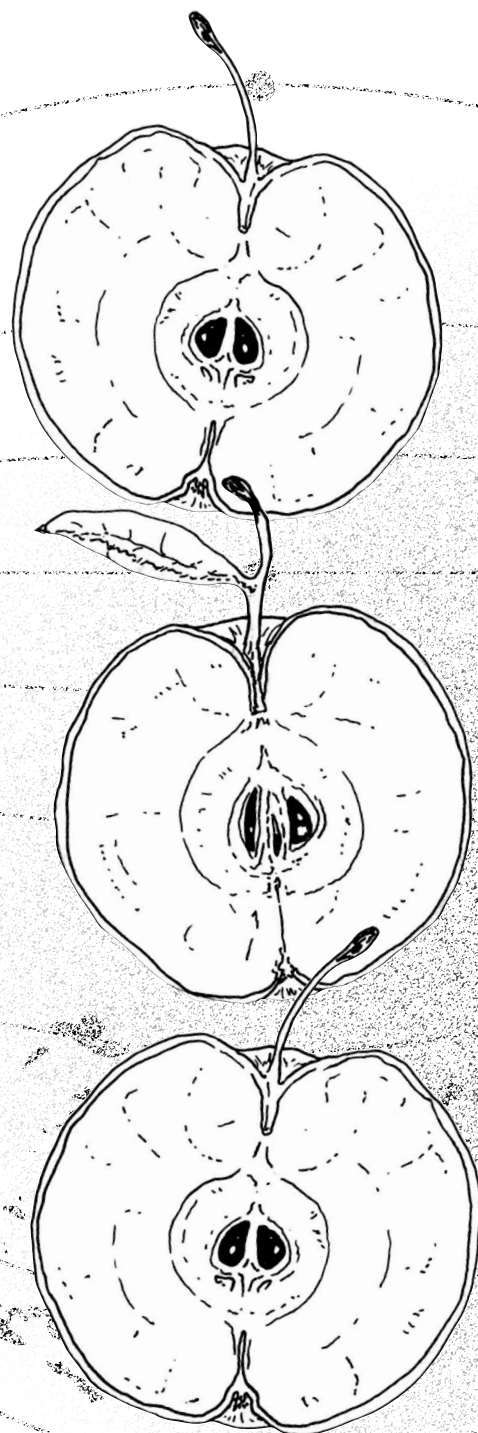
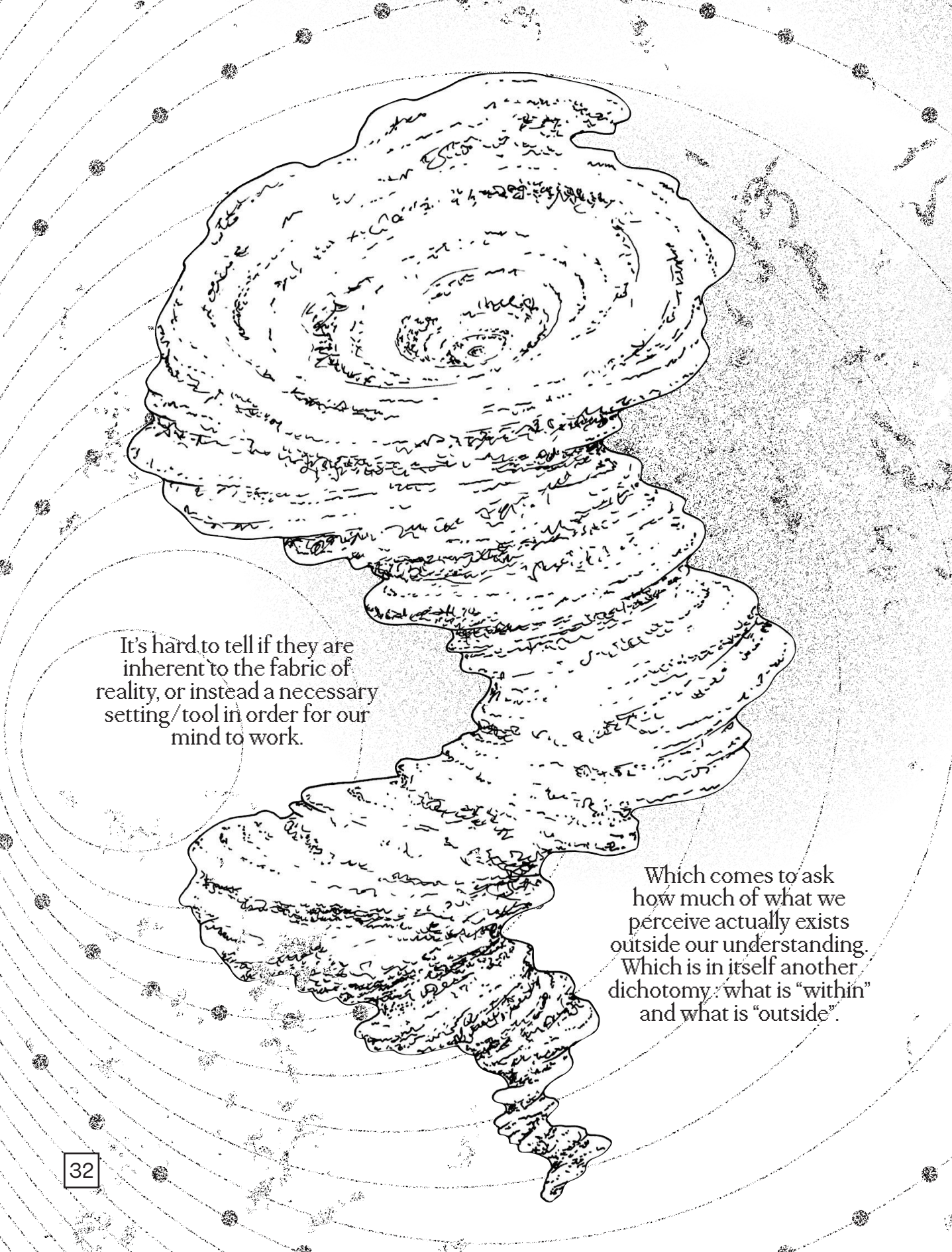


fig.3

Is a void encompassing  
everything and emptiness  
devoid of anything really  
different after all?





It's hard to tell if they are  
inherent to the fabric of  
reality, or instead a necessary  
setting/tool in order for our  
mind to work.

Which comes to ask  
how much of what we  
perceive actually exists  
outside our understanding.  
Which is in itself another  
dichotomy: what is "within"  
and what is "outside".

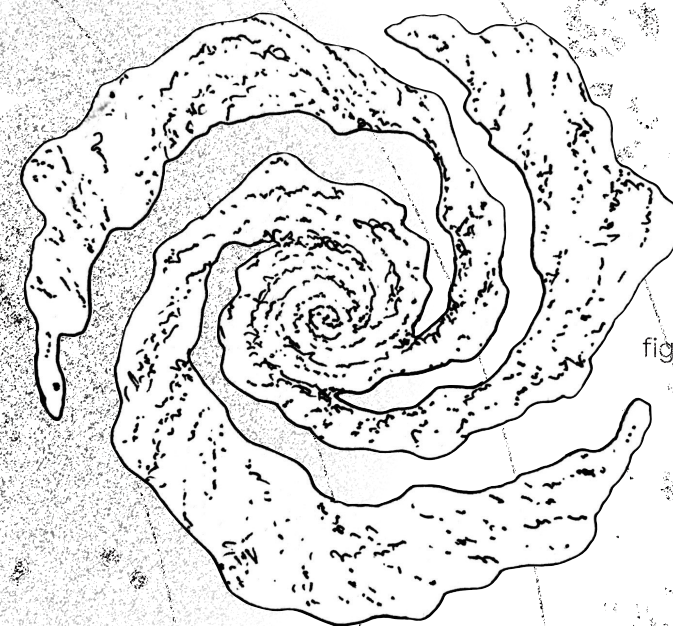


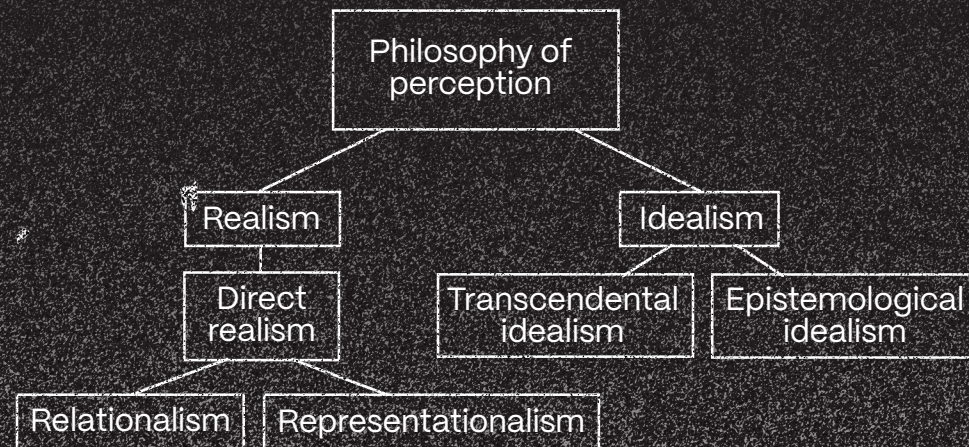
fig 4

Our understanding  
of the world defines our  
perception of it. It then begs  
the question, to what extent  
is the world discovered, or  
created?





# Appendix



## Philosophy of Perception:

The philosophy of perception is the study of how we experience the world through our senses and what this reveals about reality and our knowledge of it. It explores the nature of perceptual experiences—such as seeing, hearing, or feeling—and asks how, or if, these experiences give us access to the external world. It examines whether perception is a direct connection to reality or mediated by mental representations, and it asks how perception relates to truth, belief, and consciousness. It falls under the broader branch of epistemology (the study of knowledge) and is also closely connected to metaphysics (the study of the basic structure of reality).

It explores issues like illusions, hallucinations, and the difference between appearance and reality, and asks questions such as What is the nature of perceptual experience? Can we trust our senses? Do we perceive the world directly, or only representations of it in our minds?

## Realism

Realism is the philosophical view that objects, properties, and events exist independently of our thoughts, perceptions, or beliefs about them. In the context of perception, realism holds that there is a mind-independent world "out there," and that our sensory experiences are—at least in some cases—accurate reflections of that reality. Overall, it affirms that reality does not depend on our minds to exist.

## Direct realism

Direct realism (also known as naïve realism) is the position that perceptual experience gives us immediate access to the external world as it truly is. According to this view, objects and their properties—such as colors, shapes, and textures—exist independently of the mind and are perceived directly, without the mediation of internal representations or sense data. When one sees a red apple, for instance, one is directly aware of the apple itself, not a mental image of it.

The contemporary debate has shifted more towards relationism and representationalism.

**Relationalism** emphasizes the relational nature of perceptual experience over static mental content. In other words, to perceive is to be in a particular kind of relation with the world, not merely to have a mental state about it.

**Representationalism** (or intentionalism) holds that perceptual experiences represent the world as being a certain way, and their phenomenal character is determined by this representational content. It offers a unified account of perception, illusions, and hallucinations, and aligns well with cognitive and neuroscientific models of the mind.

For further reading:

John Searle, John Campbell, Charles Travis, Michael Martin, Joseph Kaipayil, Susanna Siegel, Alex Byrne



# Idealism

Idealism is the view that reality is fundamentally mental or immaterial—that the nature of existence depends on the mind. In the context of perception, idealism holds that physical objects do not exist independently of perceiving minds; instead, they exist as ideas or experiences within consciousness.

From an epistemological standpoint, idealism denies that we can have knowledge of anything that exists independently of the mind. Ontologically, it maintains that all things depend on the mind for their existence, thereby rejecting both physicalist and dualist frameworks. Unlike materialism, idealism upholds the primacy of consciousness, viewing it as the fundamental basis and necessary condition for all phenomena.

Kant's *transcendental idealism* is the view that while things in themselves (noumena) exist independently of us, we can never know them directly. Instead, we only have access to the phenomena—the way things appear to us—because our mind actively structures all experience using built-in forms like space, time, and categories of understanding (such as causality). According to Kant, we are not passive observers; our mind plays an essential role in shaping experience. Thus, the world we perceive is not reality as it is "in itself," but as it appears to us through the lens of human cognition.

Hegel's *epistemological idealism* is the view that knowledge and reality are fundamentally interconnected: we do not know a world that exists independently of thought, but rather one that is shaped by thought itself. Hegel argues that truth emerges through a dynamic process in which the mind gradually comes to recognize itself in the objects it knows. In this way, reality is not something outside us to be matched, but something that thought actively shapes and reveals as rational and intelligible.

For further reading:  
Critique of Pure Reason 1787 - Immanuel Kant  
Phenomenology of Spirit 1807 - G.W.F Hegel



Fig.1

A *magnetic field* is a region of space around a magnet, electric current, or changing electric field where magnetic forces can be detected. It influences magnetic materials (like iron) and moving electric charges. They are often represented by field lines that show the direction and strength of the force. These lines emerge from the north pole of a magnet and enter the south pole; are denser where the field is stronger, and never cross each other.

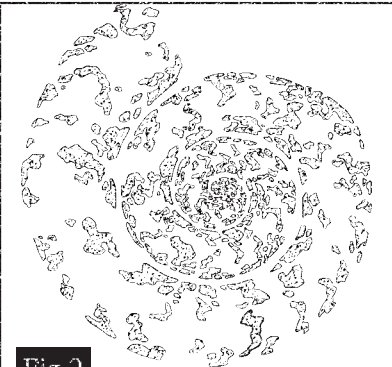
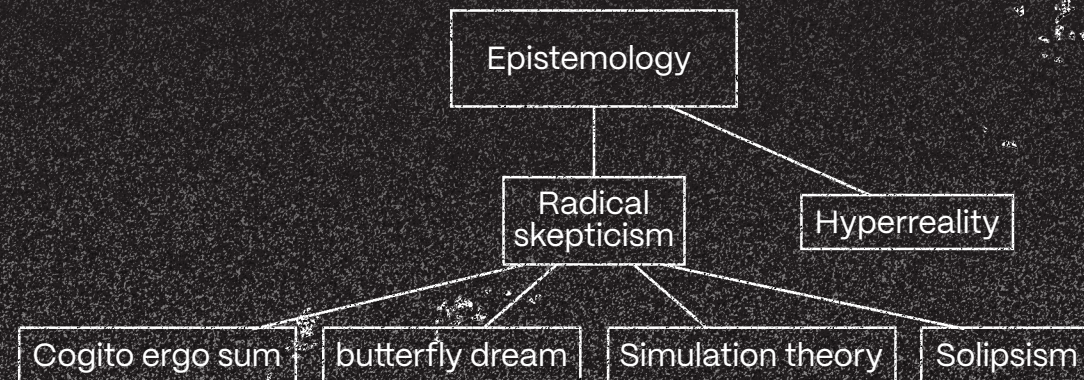


Fig.2

*Fossils* are the preserved remains, impressions, or traces of ancient organisms, typically found in sedimentary rock. They provide evidence of life from the past, helping scientists understand evolution, extinction, and changes in Earth's environment over millions of years.





## Epistemology

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature, scope, and limits of knowledge. It explores fundamental questions such as what knowledge is and how it is acquired, what distinguishes justified belief from opinion or error. Epistemology examines concepts like truth, belief, evidence, and skepticism, and plays a central role in understanding how we come to know anything at all.

## Radical skepticism

Skepticism, the philosophical view that questions the possibility or certainty of knowledge, argues that we should suspend judgment when evidence is insufficient or when our beliefs may be unreliable. Radical skepticism goes further by doubting whether any knowledge is possible at all, challenging even our most basic assumptions—such as the existence of the external world, other minds, or the reliability of reason and perception—suggesting that we may have no justified beliefs whatsoever.

## Cogito ergo sum

Descartes employs radical skepticism to strip away all beliefs that could be subject to doubt, including sensory experience, the existence of the physical world, and even mathematical truths. By imagining scenarios such as dreaming or being deceived by an all-powerful evil demon, he argues that any belief might be false. However, he realizes that the very act of doubting presupposes a thinking subject. Thus, even if all else is uncertain, the fact that he thinks proves his own existence, leading to his foundational conclusion: "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am").

## Butterfly dream,

In a famous passage from the ancient Chinese text Zhuangzi, the Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi recounts a dream in which he was a carefree butterfly, unaware of being Zhuangzi. Upon waking, he wondered: Was I Zhuangzi dreaming I was a butterfly, or am I now a butterfly dreaming I am Zhuangzi? This parable raises profound philosophical questions about the nature of reality, identity, and the unreliability of sensory experience. It illustrates a kind of skepticism about knowing what is truly real, blurring the boundary between dream and waking life, and emphasizing the fluid, shifting nature of perception and self in Daoist thought.



## Simulation Theory

Simulation theory is the hypothesis that reality as we know it may be an artificial simulation—most commonly, a highly advanced computer-generated environment created by a more technologically developed intelligence. According to this view, everything we perceive, including ourselves, could be part of a virtual reality indistinguishable from a “real” physical world. This idea was famously developed in philosophical form by Nick Bostrom, who argued that one of the following must be true: (1) advanced civilizations never reach the capability to run ancestor simulations, (2) they choose not to run them, or (3) we are almost certainly living in a simulation.

For further reading:  
Meditations on First Philosophy, 1641, René Descartes  
Zhuangzi, c. 1150, Zhuang Zhou  
Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?, 2003, Nick Bostrom  
Simulacra and Simulation, 1981, Jean Baudrillard

## Solipsism

Solipsism is the philosophical position that only one's own mind is certain to exist. It holds that everything outside of one's own consciousness—including other people, the external world, and even the passage of time—may be unknowable or illusory. Arising from radical doubt about the reliability of perception and the existence of anything independent of the self, solipsism pushes skepticism to its extreme. While it is rarely defended as a serious philosophical stance, solipsism serves as a striking illustration of where unchecked skepticism can ultimately lead. A related idea in cosmology is the **Boltzmann brain scenario**, which suggests that a disembodied consciousness with false memories could spontaneously arise from random fluctuations—raising similar doubts about the trustworthiness of our experience.

## Hyperreality

Hyperreality is a concept from postmodern theory, particularly developed by Jean Baudrillard, which refers to a condition in which the distinction between reality and simulation collapses. In hyperreality, representations (such as images, media, or signs) become more real to us than the actual reality they once referred to—so much so that they begin to replace or obscure reality itself. It describes a world where simulations no longer reflect reality but construct it, creating a sense of reality that is manufactured, self-referential, and detached from any original reference

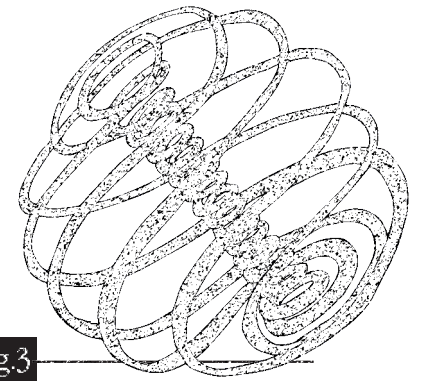


Fig. 3

A **torus field** is a continuous, self-organizing energy pattern shaped like a doughnut, characterized by a flow that loops from the center outward and back in again. This structure appears in many natural and theoretical systems, including magnetic fields, fluid dynamics, and models of cosmology. It is often used to describe how energy or information circulates within a stable, dynamic system.

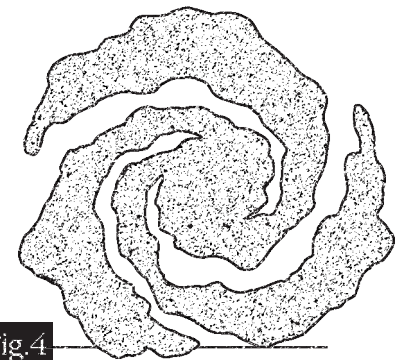
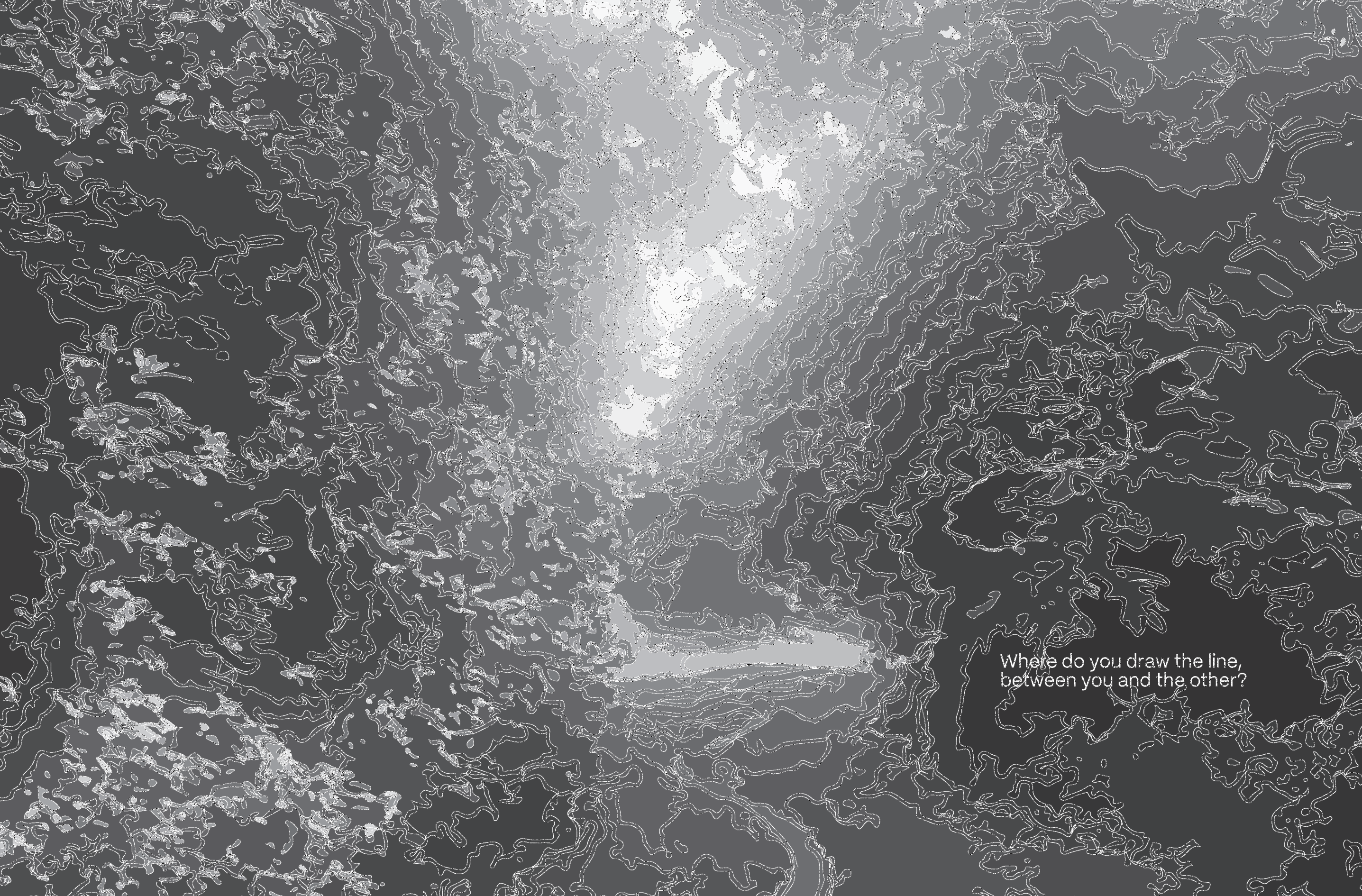


Fig. 4

A **tornado** is a rapidly rotating column of air that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground, capable of causing severe destruction with strong winds and flying debris. It forms when warm, moist air meets cold, dry air, creating instability and wind rotation. The eye of the storm (more accurately called the center or core) is the calm, low-pressure area at the very center of the vortex. Unlike hurricanes, tornadoes don't always have a clearly defined eye, but when present, it's usually calm compared to the violent winds around it





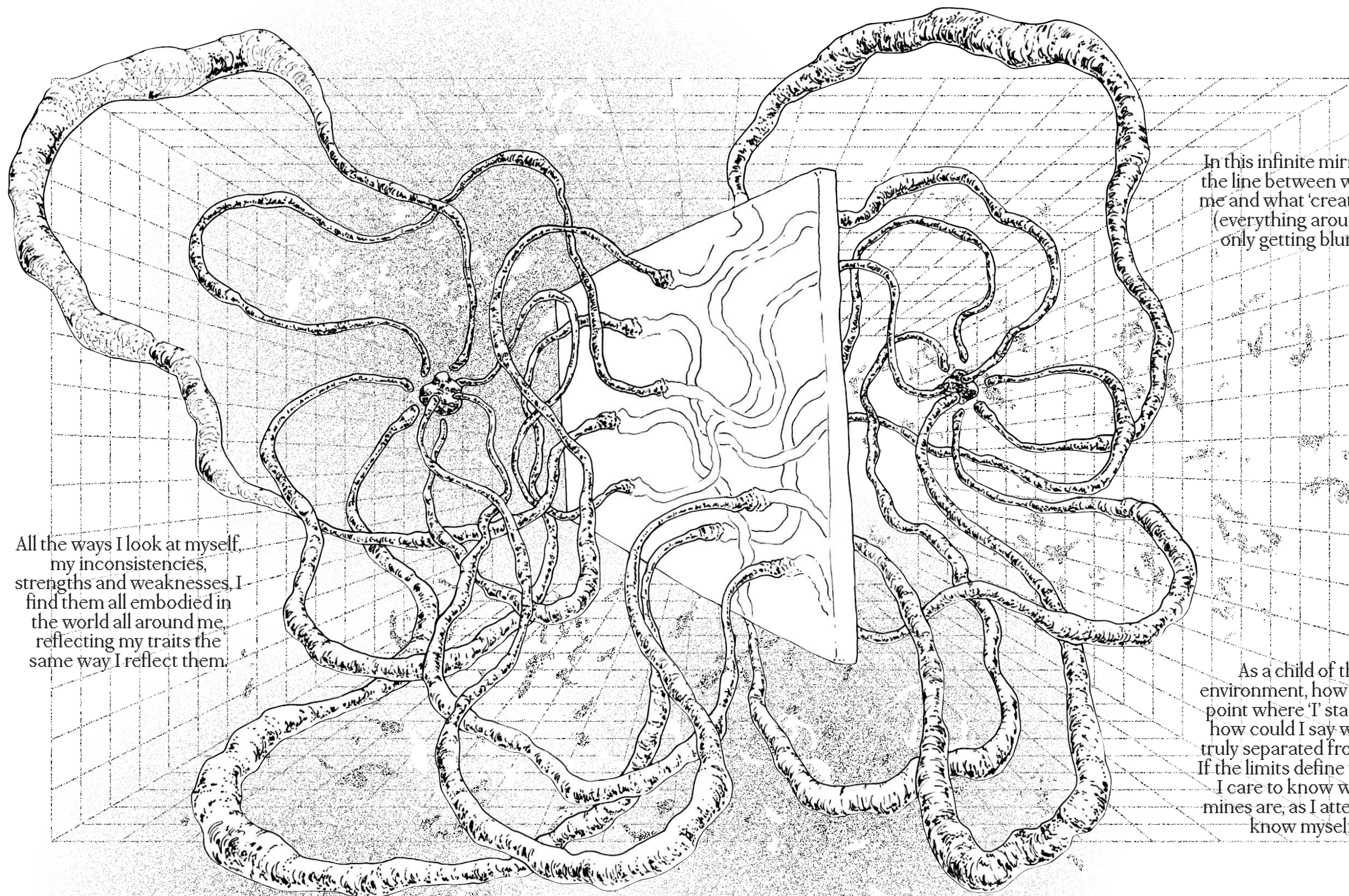
Where do you draw the line,  
between you and the other?



The border between  
the self and the world





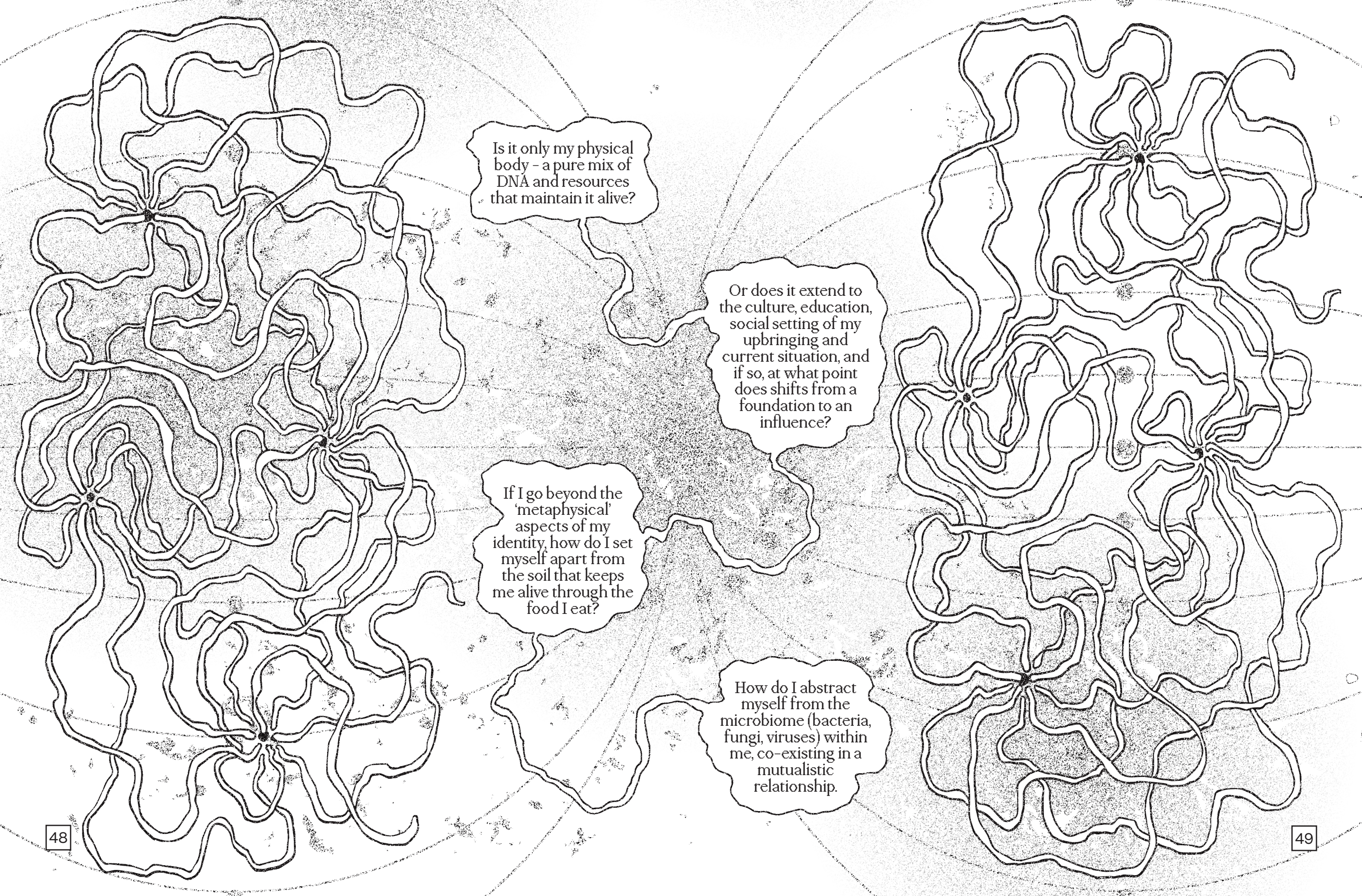


All the ways I look at myself,  
my inconsistencies,  
strengths and weaknesses, I  
find them all embodied in  
the world all around me,  
reflecting my traits the  
same way I reflect them.

In this infinite mirroring,  
the line between what 'is'  
me and what 'created' me  
(everything around) is  
only getting blurrier.

As a child of this  
environment, how could I  
point where 'I' start, and  
how could I say what is  
truly separated from me?  
If the limits define what is,  
I care to know where  
mine are, as I attempt to  
know myself.





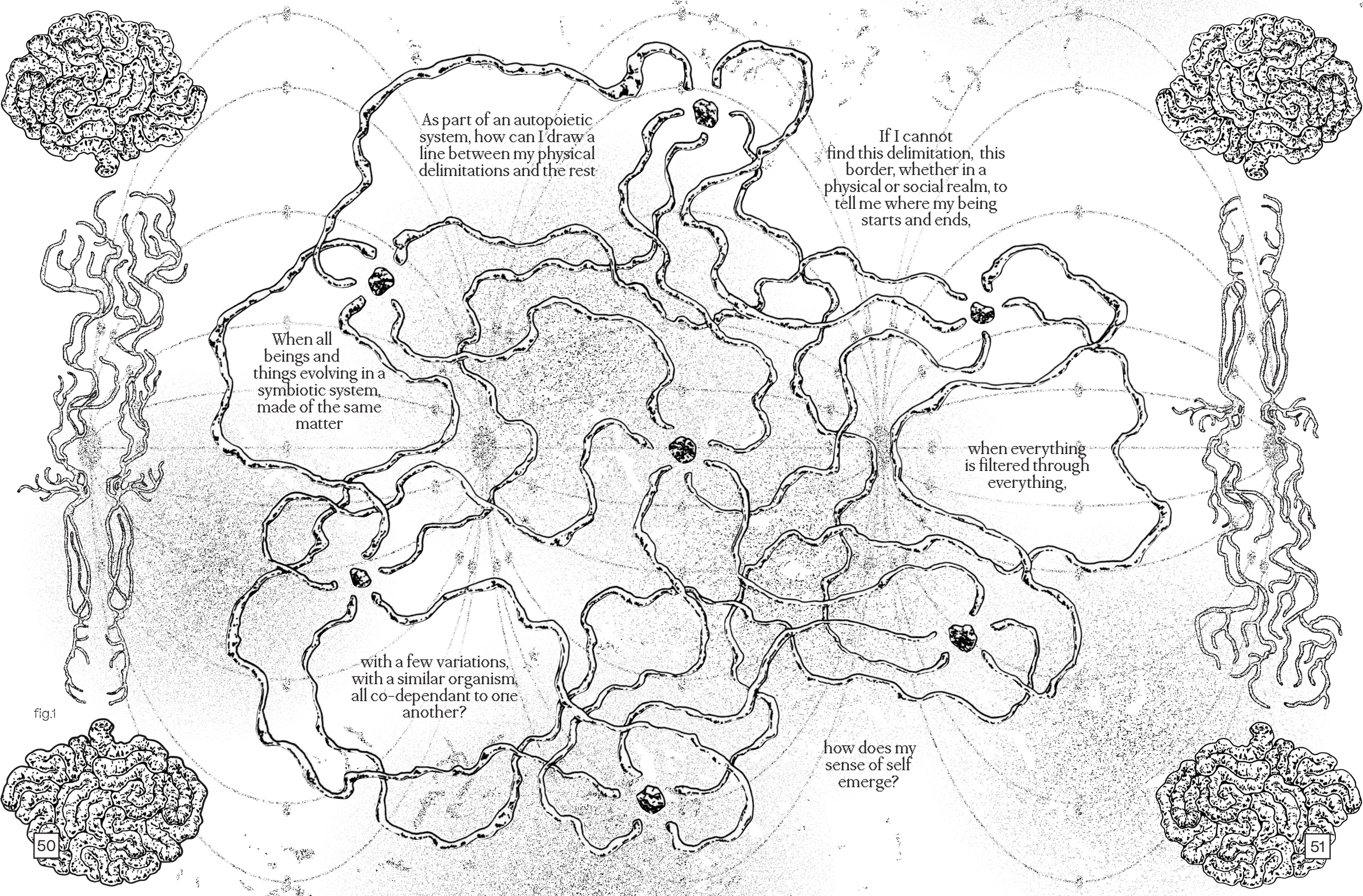
Is it only my physical  
body - a pure mix of  
DNA and resources  
that maintain it alive?

Or does it extend to  
the culture, education,  
social setting of my  
upbringing and  
current situation, and  
if so, at what point  
does shifts from a  
foundation to an  
influence?

If I go beyond the  
'metaphysical'  
aspects of my  
identity, how do I set  
myself apart from  
the soil that keeps  
me alive through the  
food I eat?

How do I abstract  
myself from the  
microbiome (bacteria,  
fungi, viruses) within  
me, co-existing in a  
mutualistic  
relationship.





As part of an autopoietic system, how can I draw a line between my physical delimitations and the rest

If I cannot find this delimitation, this border, whether in a physical or social realm, to tell me where my being starts and ends,

When all beings and things evolving in a symbiotic system, made of the same matter

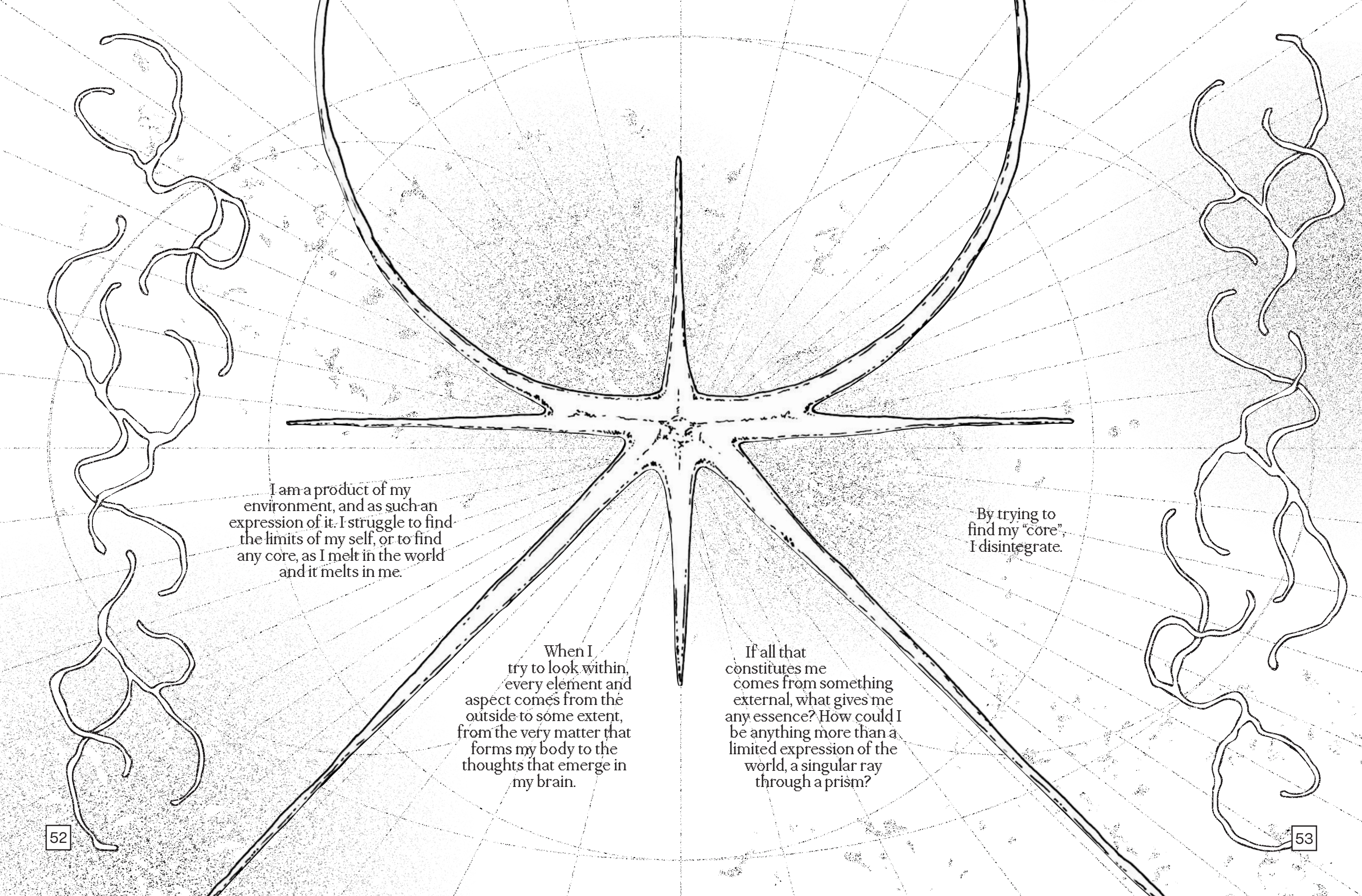
when everything is filtered through everything,

with a few variations, with a similar organism, all co-dependant to one another?

how does my sense of self emerge?

fig.1






I am a product of my environment, and as such an expression of it. I struggle to find the limits of my self, or to find any core, as I melt in the world and it melts in me.

When I try to look within, every element and aspect comes from the outside to some extent, from the very matter that forms my body to the thoughts that emerge in my brain.

By trying to find my "core", I disintegrate.

If all that constitutes me comes from something external, what gives me any essence? How could I be anything more than a limited expression of the world, a singular ray through a prism?



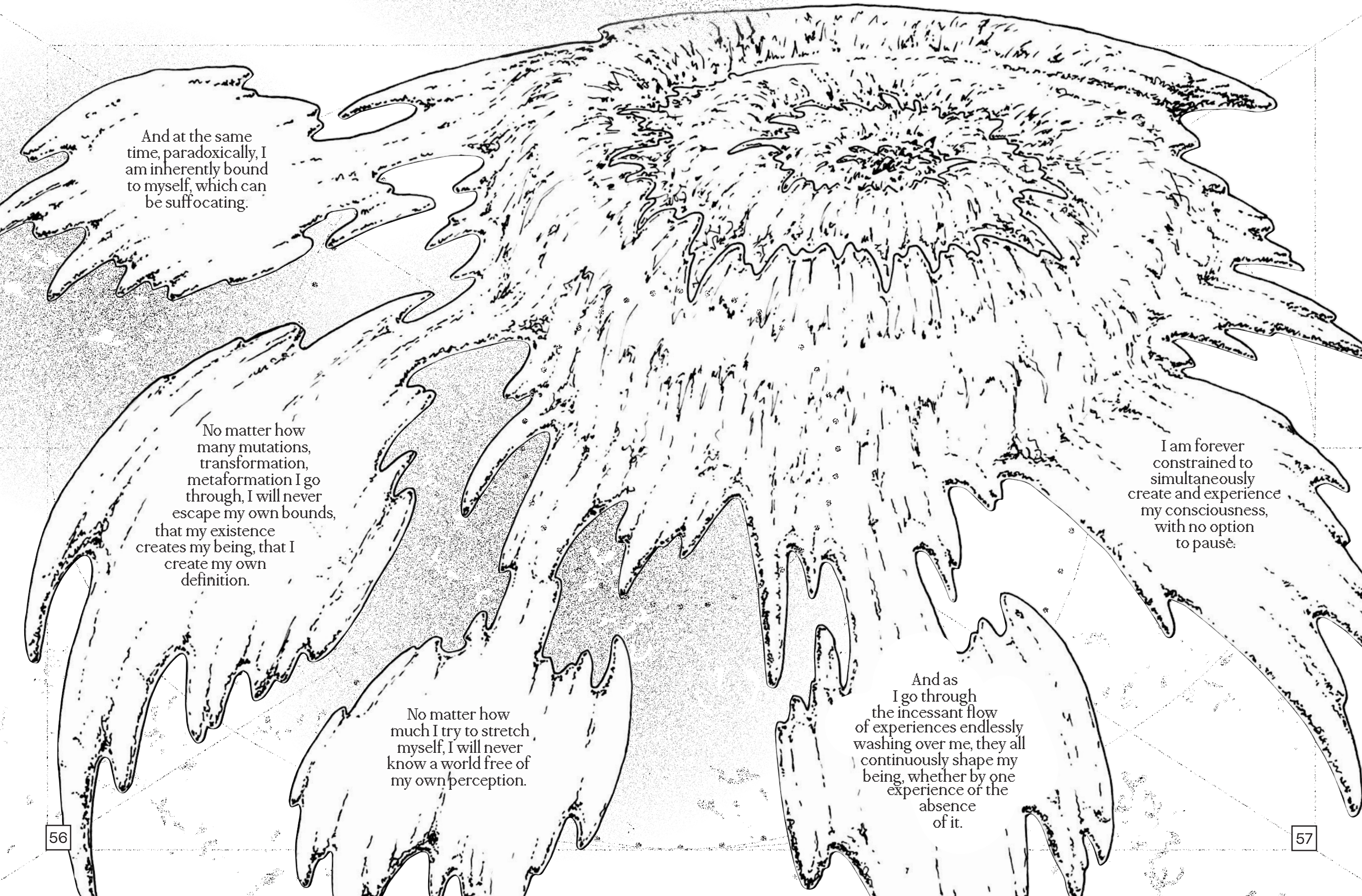


I exist, I exist because I think, because I can feel it, I can feel my self. But is it me, or is it the world through me? My ego, who insatiably wants to get the credit for my existence, does it deserve it more than all the cosmos that made it?

Is my ego a fool, a trickster, trying to convince me that I am a separate entity from everything else that is? Instead of seeing that the "I" I perceive is just a fragment of the consciousness of the whole universe (whether it goes beyond humankind or not)

fig.2





And at the same  
time, paradoxically, I  
am inherently bound  
to myself, which can  
be suffocating.


No matter how  
many mutations,  
transformation,  
metaformation I go  
through, I will never  
escape my own bounds,  
that my existence  
creates my being, that I  
create my own  
definition.

No matter how  
much I try to stretch  
myself, I will never  
know a world free of  
my own perception.

I am forever  
constrained to  
simultaneously  
create and experience  
my consciousness,  
with no option  
to pause.

And as  
I go through  
the incessant flow  
of experiences endlessly  
washing over me, they all  
continuously shape my  
being, whether by one  
experience or the  
absence  
of it.

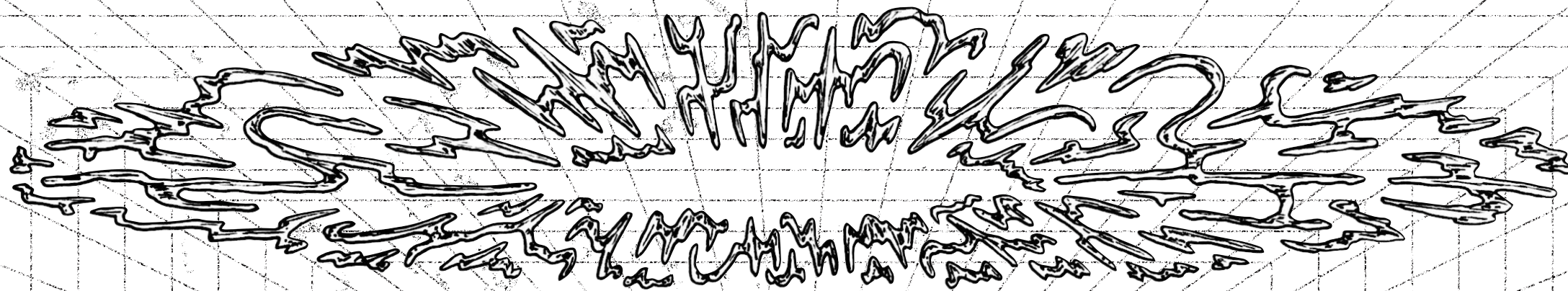




I am  
simultaneously  
only and ever  
myself, and at the  
same time, an  
expression of the  
whole world, just  
another element in a  
big organism.

It is  
frustrating, for a  
lack of a better  
word, to be an  
expression of the entire  
world, yet unable to  
taste it outside my own  
limits. Like a voice in  
the symphony of the  
world, only able to  
hear itself.





So much emphasis and so much trouble and distress over something entirely outside of your control?! This feeling of self may only be an evolutionary mechanism developed as we evolved as a social species, later turning into this focus on individuality in a capitalist society - and yet despite knowing that you are still so adamant on understanding whatever "you" might be.

You are only a victim of the idea that one can choose who they are, incapable of setting yourself completely free from the chains of artificial freedom.

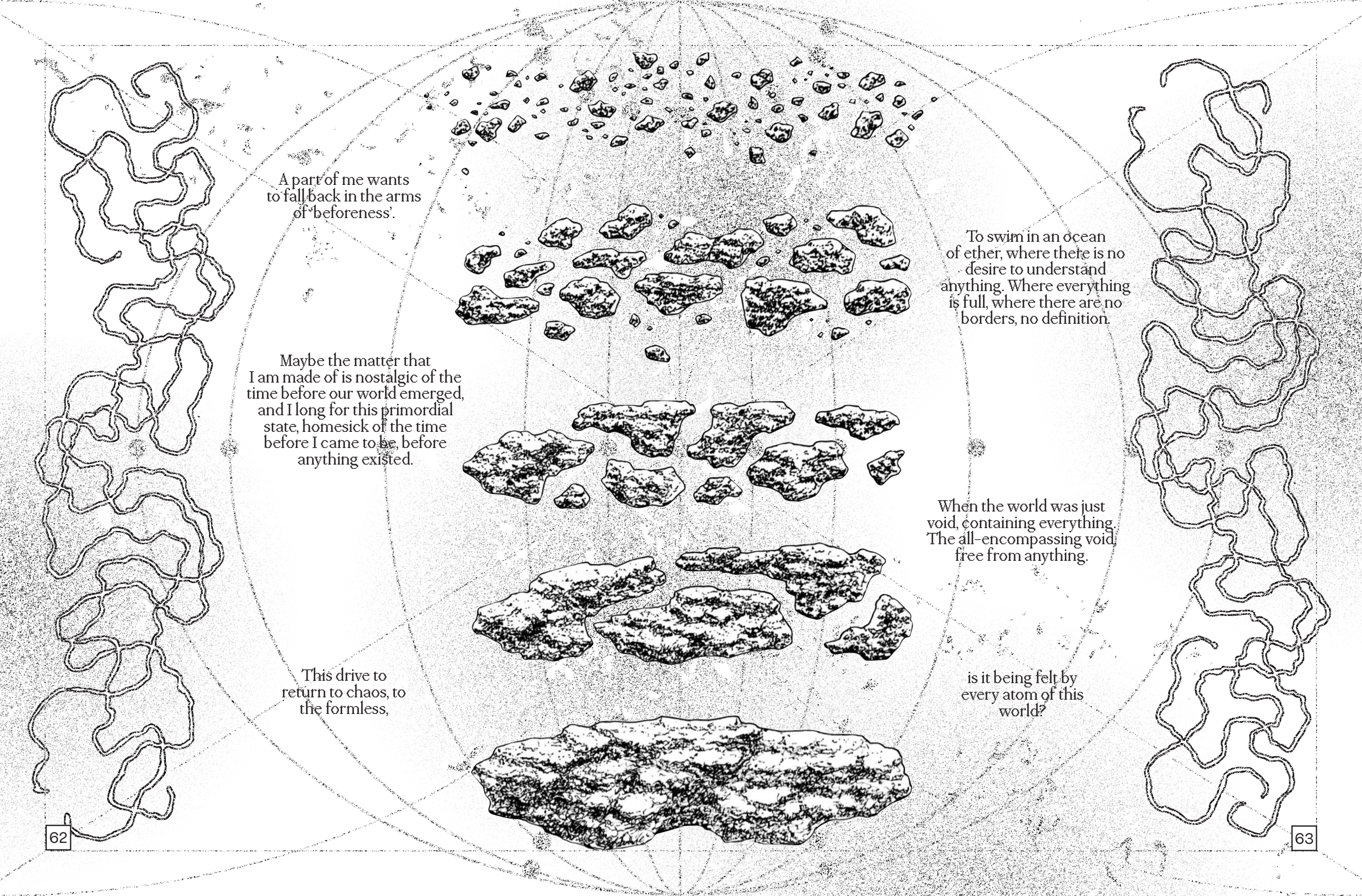
Just like freewill could be nothing but a necessary illusion, you feel obliged to hold so dearly onto this sense of individuality and personal identity (however paradoxical that is), in order to keep belonging to the social norms set by your environment.

Paradoxically, in order to be part of a whole, of an interconnected community that loves to believe it is composed of independent agents, to blend with the web, one has to get a good strong grip of what makes them unique.



fig.3





A part of me wants  
to fall back in the arms  
of 'beforeness'.

Maybe the matter that  
I am made of is nostalgic of the  
time before our world emerged,  
and I long for this primordial  
state, homesick of the time  
before I came to be, before  
anything existed.


This drive to  
return to chaos, to  
the formless,

To swim in an ocean  
of ether, where there is no  
desire to understand  
anything. Where everything  
is full, where there are no  
borders, no definition.

When the world was just  
void, containing everything.  
The all-encompassing void  
free from anything.

is it being felt by  
every atom of this  
world?





It seems like not only  
my body, but my mind  
as well longs to blend in  
everything.

By relentlessly comparing  
everything to each other,  
until it all unites, to reach  
the conclusion that even  
the furthest ideas meet  
somewhere, is perhaps not  
a desire to understand, as I  
thought it was, but my mind  
unconsciously longing for a  
return to this formless  
state.

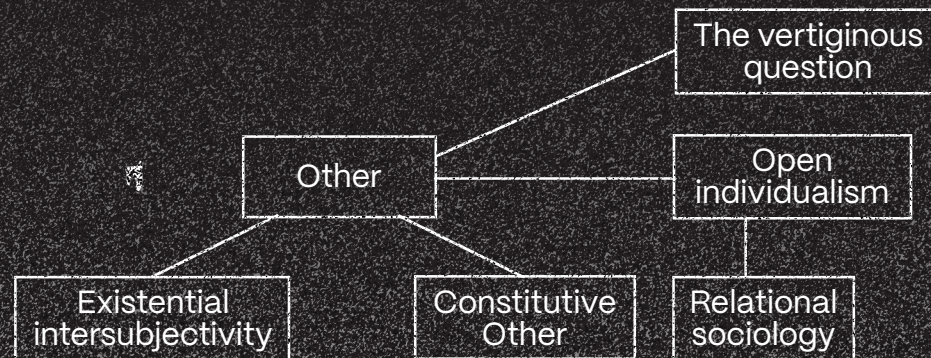
Could it be that our  
thoughts and actions are  
invisibly pushed by this  
nostalgia for nothingness/  
everything-ness, a drive to  
absolutism, like growth is  
attracted to death.

Perhaps it is expressed by  
the world itself through  
the unstoppable increase  
of entropy and the  
passage of time. Maybe  
death isn't exclusive to life,  
but an inherent part of  
existence as well.  
And yet, how paradoxical  
it is to imagine any end for  
space and time.

fig.4



# Appendix



## Other

In philosophy, the "Other" refers to a being, perspective, or identity that is perceived as fundamentally distinct from the self. The concept is central to theories of subjectivity, identity, and intersubjectivity, where the self is understood to define itself in relation to that which it is not. The Other functions not merely as a contrasting category, but as a constitutive element in the formation of the self. This distinction is not merely descriptive but often charged with ethical, social, or existential significance. In encountering the Other, the self is challenged to recognize difference, and in doing so, it confronts the limits of its own perspective. The Other is thus both a mirror and a boundary: it reflects aspects of the self while also resisting full understanding or assimilation.

## Existential intersubjectivity

In Jean-Paul Sartre's existential phenomenology, particularly in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), the Other is a central figure in the constitution of selfhood. Sartre argues that the presence of the Other introduces a fundamental shift in one's self-awareness: through the gaze of the Other, the self becomes aware of itself as an object in the world, subject to external judgment and definition. This encounter reveals the self's vulnerability to being fixed by the Other's perception, producing experiences such as shame and alienation. Yet, Sartre maintains that this intersubjective relation is essential to the formation of self-consciousness, even as it imposes a tension between one's subjective freedom and one's objectification in the eyes of another. The Other, in Sartre's view, is thus both a source of existential conflict and a necessary condition for the self's realization.

## Constitutive Other

In Hegel's philosophy, the constitutive Other plays a crucial role in the development of self-consciousness. For Hegel, the self does not become fully aware of itself in isolation but only through a dialectical relationship with another consciousness. This process is famously illustrated in the master-slave dialectic, where two self-conscious beings confront each other, each seeking recognition from the other. Through this struggle for mutual recognition, the self comes to understand itself not simply as an independent subject, but as one whose identity is shaped by being recognized by another subject. Thus, the Other is constitutive of the self.



## Open individualism

Open Individualism is a philosophical position concerning personal identity and consciousness, which asserts that all conscious beings are ultimately one and the same individual. In this view, while individuals may appear to be distinct, each person's subjective experience is actually a manifestation of a single, unified consciousness that spans across time and space. The key idea is that there is no true separation between individuals; rather, we are all different experiences of the same underlying subject. This perspective challenges traditional notions of personal identity and encourages a view where the boundaries between selves are seen as illusory, leading to a radically interconnected understanding of existence. In essence, Open Individualism suggests that the "self" is not confined to any one body or life but is a universal subject that experiences reality through different individuals at various points in time.

## Relational sociology

Relational sociology is a theoretical approach in sociology that emphasizes the primacy of social relations over individual attributes or fixed entities. Rather than viewing society as made up of isolated individuals with inherent properties, relational sociology focuses on how individuals and social structures are constituted through dynamic interactions and relationships. It sees social reality as a web of connections—shaped by networks, positions, and processes—where meaning and identity emerge from relationships rather than existing independently.

## The vertiginous question

The vertiginous question refers to the unsettling inquiry: "Why am I this particular subject of experience, and not someone else?", or in other words, "Why am I me?". It expresses a deep existential wonder—or vertigo—about the nature of personal identity and first-person consciousness. Unlike questions about the body or brain, the vertiginous question confronts the mystery of self-location: why this stream of consciousness is happening here, rather than from any of the countless other perspectives that exist. It is often linked to debates in philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and theories of personal identity, and challenges assumptions about the self's place in a world full of other conscious beings.

For further reading:

Being and Nothingness, 1943, Jean Paul Sartre  
Phenomenology of Spirit, 1807, G.W.F Hegel  
I Am You: the Metaphysical Foundations for Global Ethics, 2004, Daniel Kolak  
The View from Nowhere, 1986, Thomas Nagel

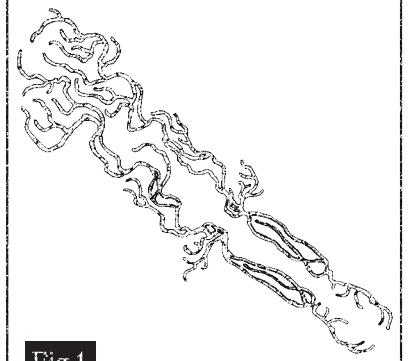


Fig 1

**The vagus nerve** is the longest cranial nerve, connecting the brain to organs like the heart, lungs, and especially the gut. It plays a key role in the parasympathetic nervous system, helping regulate heart rate, digestion, and breathing, and it forms a major communication pathway between the brain and the gut by linking neurons in both systems.

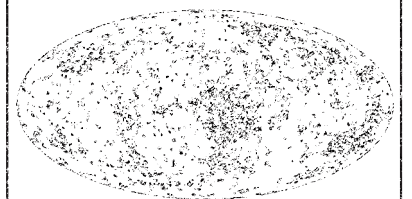
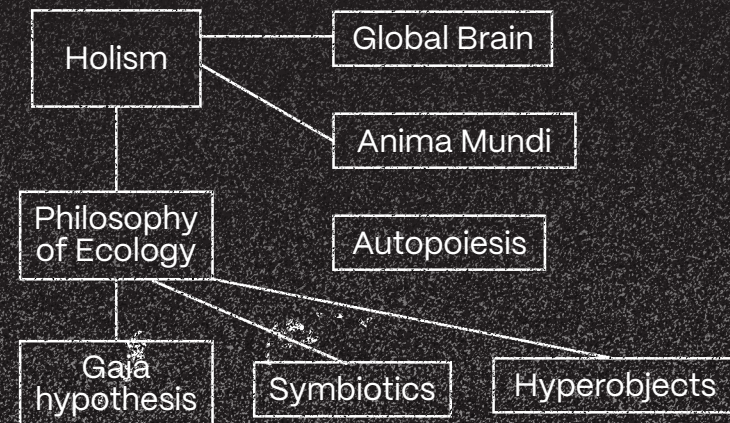


Fig 2

**The observable universe** is the portion of the entire universe that we can see or detect from Earth, limited by the speed of light and the age of the universe. It spans about 93 billion light-years in diameter and contains all the galaxies, stars, and cosmic phenomena whose light has had time to reach us since the Big Bang.





## Holism

Holism is a philosophical and scientific perspective that asserts that systems and their properties must be understood as wholes, rather than merely as the sum of their individual components. It emphasizes the idea that the interactions between parts within a system are essential to understanding the system itself, as these relationships often give rise to emergent properties that cannot be explained by examining the parts in isolation. Holism challenges reductionist approaches, which break things down into smaller, separate elements, and instead proposes that true understanding arises from recognizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all elements within a system. This view extends across various domains, including ecology, biology, philosophy, and sociology, and promotes an integrated approach to understanding complex phenomena.

## Philosophy of Ecology

The philosophy of ecology is a branch of philosophy that explores the foundational concepts, ethical implications, and theoretical underpinnings of ecology. It examines questions related to the nature of ecosystems, the relationships between living organisms and their environments, and the ethical considerations of human interactions with nature. Key topics include the interconnectedness of life, the value of biodiversity, and the moral responsibilities humans have toward the natural world. The philosophy of ecology challenges traditional, human-centered views of nature, advocating for more ecocentric or holistic perspectives that recognize the intrinsic value of all life forms and ecological systems. It also addresses how ecological principles should inform environmental policies, conservation practices, and the sustainability of life on Earth.

## The Gaia Hypothesis

The Gaia Hypothesis (or Gaia principle), proposed by scientist James Lovelock and supported by microbiologist Lynn Margulis in the 1970s, suggests that the Earth and its biosphere function as a self-regulating, living organism. According to this idea, the Earth's ecosystems, atmosphere, oceans, and organisms interact in complex ways to maintain conditions that are conducive to life, much like the homeostasis found in living organisms. Gaia theory posits that life on Earth is not just a passive part of the environment but actively contributes to maintaining the conditions necessary for its own survival, regulating aspects such as temperature, atmospheric composition, and the cycling of nutrients. While it is not a literal assertion that the Earth is a conscious organism, the Gaia Hypothesis encourages a holistic view of the planet, emphasizing the interdependence of all living and non-living systems and challenging traditional, mechanistic perspectives on the natural world. It has influenced environmental thought, inspiring both scientific and philosophical discussions about ecology, sustainability, and the relationship between humans and the Earth.



## Symbiotics

Symbiotics is a relatively new interdisciplinary field that studies symbiosis—the biological and ecological interactions between different species in close, long-term relationships. It aims to explore the social, cultural, and philosophical implications of these interdependent relationships, often extending the concept of symbiosis beyond biology to include interactions between human societies and the natural environment.

In this context, symbiotics can be seen as a way of understanding cooperation, mutual aid, and interdependence not only in ecological systems but also in cultural, social, and technological networks. It has been used to explore themes such as ecology, cooperation in human societies, collective intelligence, and the broader interconnectedness of life on Earth. The term is often applied in the study of ecosystem dynamics, but it also finds its way into areas like philosophy of ecology, ethics, and social theory.

## Hyperobjects

Hyperobjects, a concept introduced by philosopher Timothy Morton, refer to entities that are so vast in scale, duration, or complexity that they exceed our usual ways of perceiving and understanding. Examples include climate change, radioactive waste, or global capitalism—phenomena that are massively distributed in time and space, and cannot be grasped fully at once. Morton argues that hyperobjects challenge traditional boundaries between subject and object, human and environment. They entangle us, affect our lives constantly, yet often remain elusive and difficult to localize. As such, they compel a rethinking of ontology, ethics, and our place within the Earth system, aligning with ecological and posthumanist philosophy.

## Autopoiesis

Autopoiesis is a concept developed by biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela to describe the self-producing and self-maintaining nature of living systems. An autopoietic system is one that continuously regenerates and sustains itself through its own internal processes—maintaining its boundaries, structure, and identity over time. Originally introduced to define what constitutes life, autopoiesis has also influenced fields like cognitive science, systems theory, and philosophy. It emphasizes that living beings are organizationally closed (they produce their own components) while being structurally open (interacting with their environment). This concept challenges linear, mechanistic views of life, highlighting instead the self-organizing, self-referential nature of living systems.

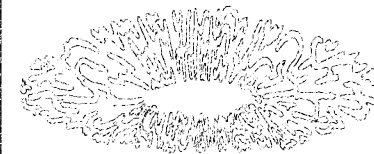


Fig 3

**The iris** is the colored part of the eye that surrounds the pupil and controls how much light enters by adjusting the size of the pupil. It contains muscles that expand or contract in response to light levels, helping protect the retina and regulate vision.

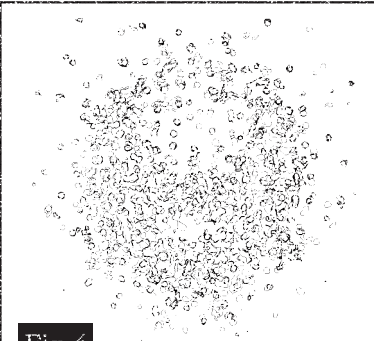


Fig 4

**Entropy** is a fundamental concept in physics and thermodynamics that measures the degree of disorder or randomness within a system. It quantifies how energy becomes spread out and less available to do work. As systems evolve naturally, they tend to move from a state of order to greater disorder, meaning entropy increases over time. This idea is central to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that the total entropy of an isolated system can never decrease, explaining why processes like heat flow and mixing are irreversible and why the universe tends toward greater disorder overall.



## Anima Mundi

Anima Mundi, Latin for "soul of the world," is an ancient philosophical concept that posits the world as a living, unified organism imbued with a universal soul or spirit. Rooted in Platonism and later developed by thinkers like Plotinus and Giordano Bruno, the idea suggests that all things in the cosmos are interconnected through this underlying, animating principle.

In this view, the Anima Mundi serves as the bridge between the material and spiritual realms, giving life, order, and intelligence to the universe. It has influenced various traditions, including Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Romantic natural philosophy, and continues to appear in ecological and holistic worldviews that see nature as intrinsically alive and ensouled.

*David Abram*, a cultural ecologist and philosopher best known for his work exploring the relationship between human perception, language, and the natural world, draws on phenomenology—particularly the work of Merleau-Ponty—to argue that human experience is deeply embedded in the more-than-human world. He emphasizes the role of oral traditions, embodied experience, and ecological awareness in shaping perception. He critiques the distancing effects of modern, abstract language and calls for a renewed attentiveness to the sensuous, living presence of the Earth, and advocates for a worldview that recognizes the agency and subjectivity of non-human beings. His work bridges philosophy, environmentalism, and indigenous wisdom, and offers a poetic and ethical vision of human-nature interconnectedness.

For further reading:

Novacene, 2019, James Lovelock

The Spell of the Sensuous, 1996, David Abram

Hyperobjects, Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World, 2013, Timothy Morton

## The global brain

The Global Brain is a theoretical concept proposing that the planetary network of humans, technologies, and information systems—especially the internet—is evolving into a kind of collective intelligence, akin to a brain at the global scale. In this view, individual humans act like neurons, while digital communication networks serve as synapses, enabling rapid coordination, learning, and adaptation across the globe.

Popularized by thinkers like Francis Heylighen and Peter Russell, the idea suggests that as our connectivity increases, the Earth itself may begin to exhibit emergent cognitive properties, potentially becoming a self-aware or self-regulating system. Closely related to systems theory, cybernetics, and the Gaia hypothesis, the Global Brain concept envisions humanity not as isolated individuals, but as components of a larger, intelligent planetary organism.





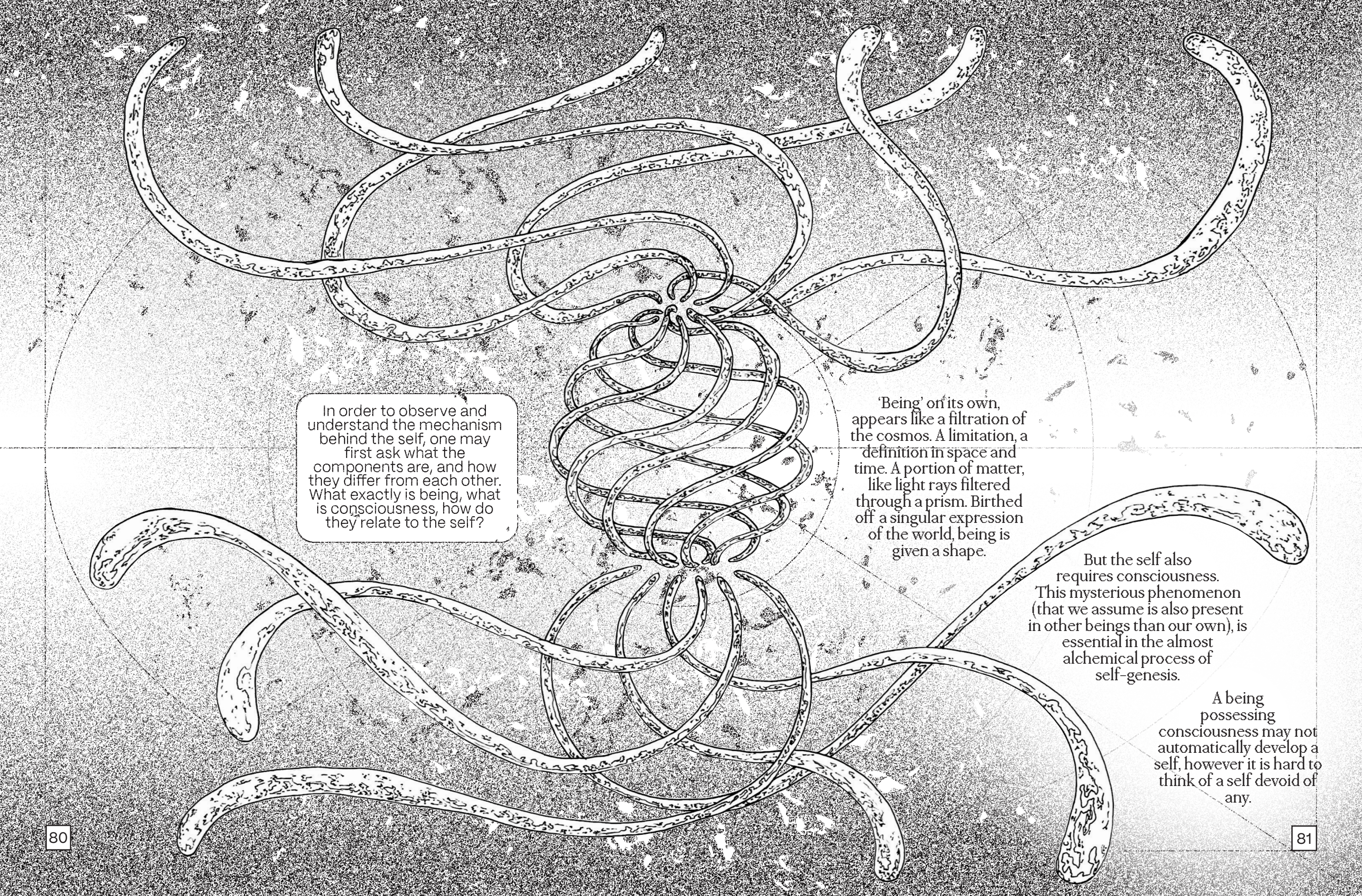
Where do you find your self  
on this image?



Being a being and  
being a self







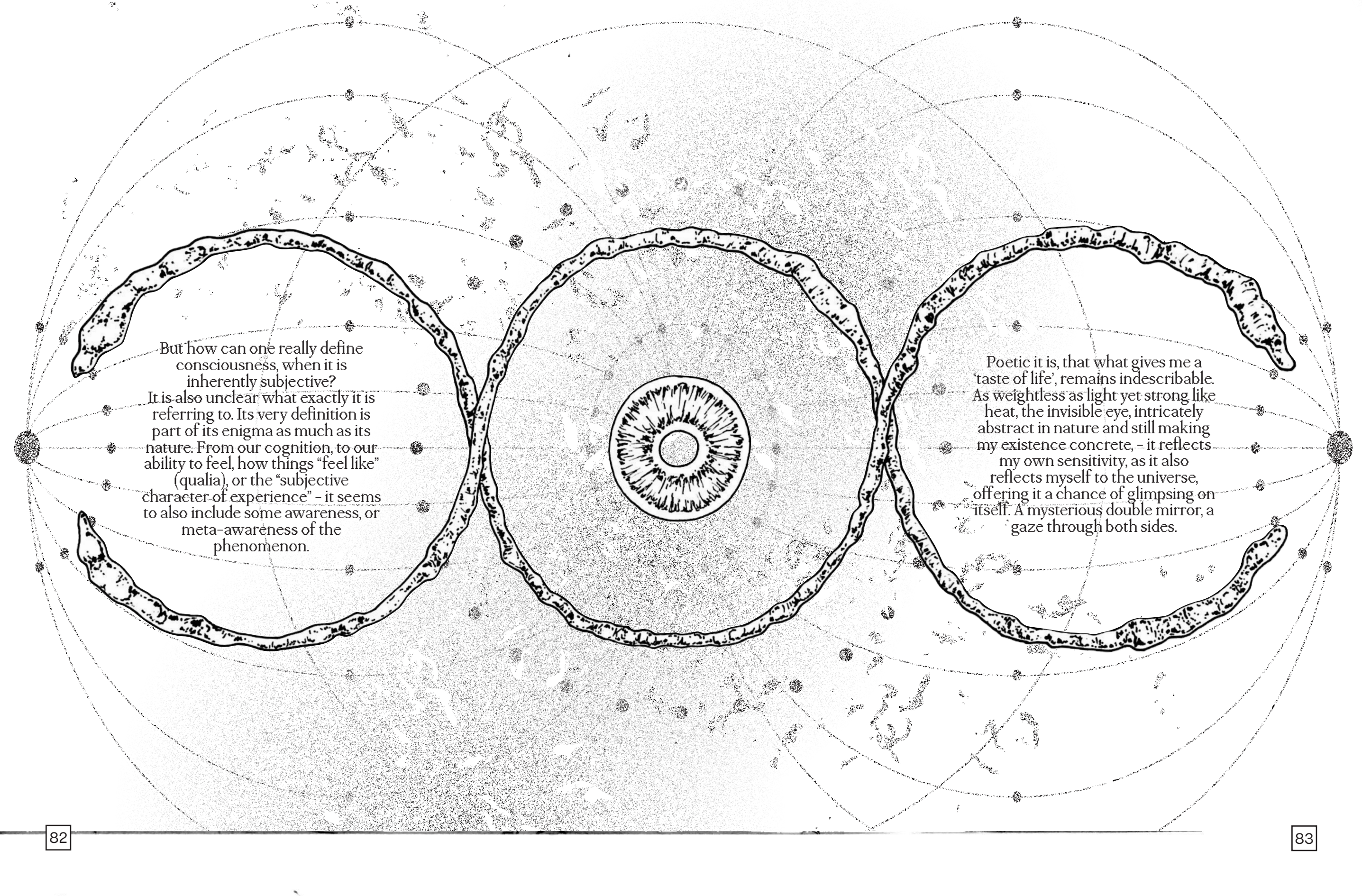
In order to observe and understand the mechanism behind the self, one may first ask what the components are, and how they differ from each other. What exactly is being, what is consciousness, how do they relate to the self?

'Being' on its own, appears like a filtration of the cosmos. A limitation, a definition in space and time. A portion of matter, like light rays filtered through a prism. Birthed off a singular expression of the world, being is given a shape.

But the self also requires consciousness. This mysterious phenomenon (that we assume is also present in other beings than our own), is essential in the almost alchemical process of self-genesis.

A being possessing consciousness may not automatically develop a self, however it is hard to think of a self devoid of any.

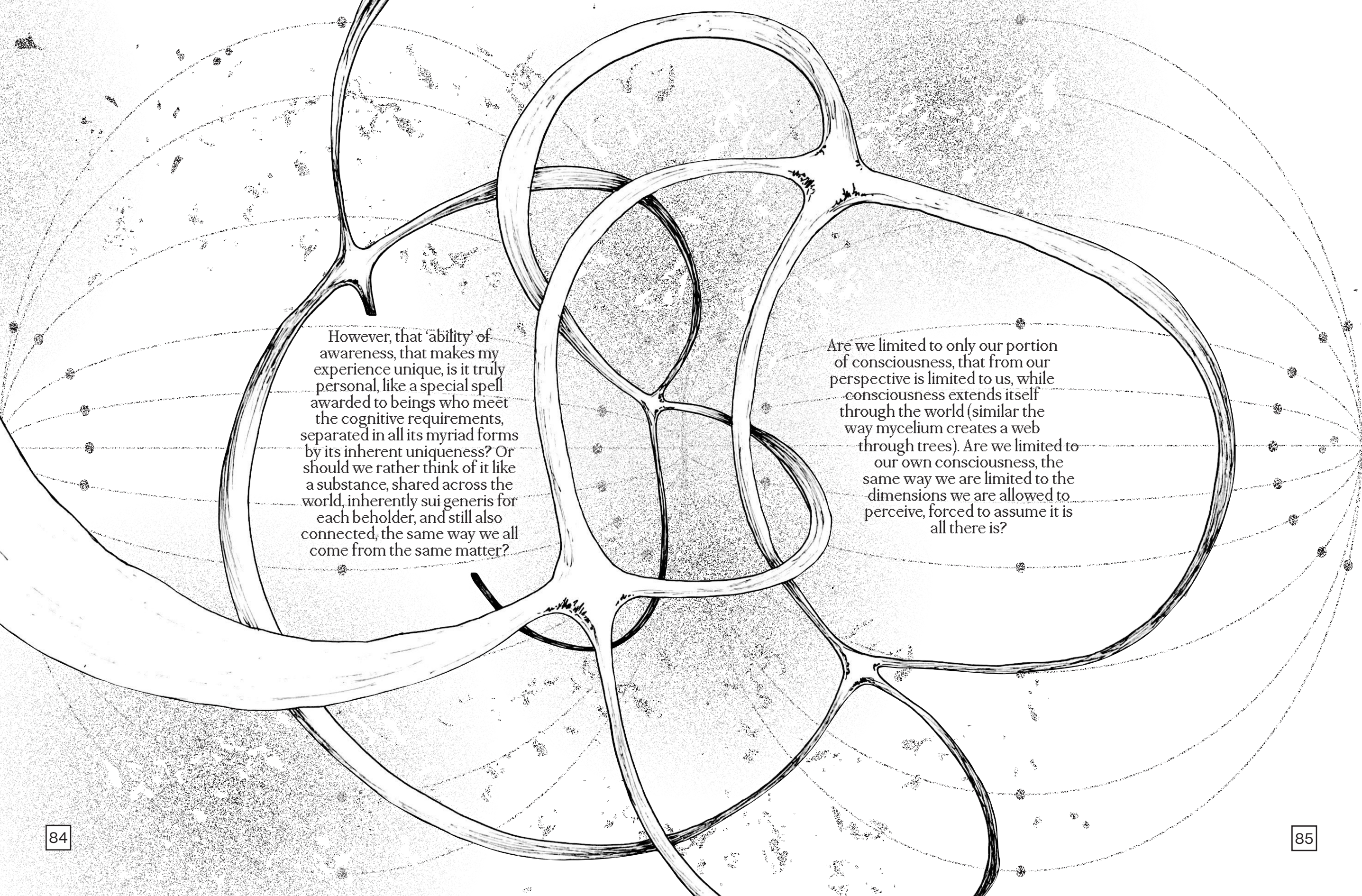




But how can one really define consciousness, when it is inherently subjective? It is also unclear what exactly it is referring to. Its very definition is part of its enigma as much as its nature. From our cognition, to our ability to feel, how things "feel like" (qualia), or the "subjective character of experience" - it seems to also include some awareness, or meta-awareness of the phenomenon.

Poetic it is, that what gives me a 'taste of life', remains indescribable. As weightless as light yet strong like heat, the invisible eye, intricately abstract in nature and still making my existence concrete, - it reflects my own sensitivity, as it also reflects myself to the universe, offering it a chance of glimpsing on itself. A mysterious double mirror, a gaze through both sides.

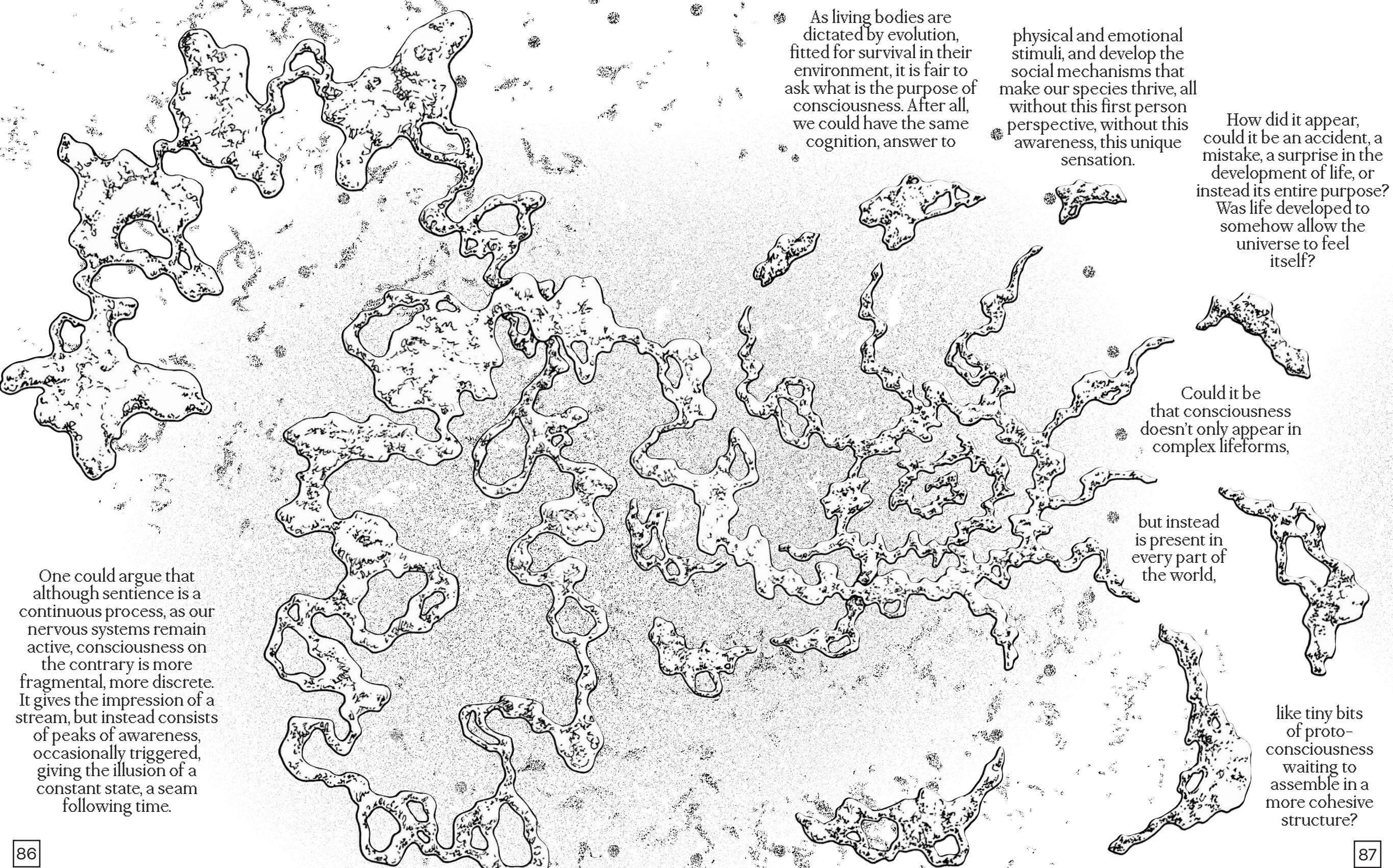




However, that 'ability' of awareness, that makes my experience unique, is it truly personal, like a special spell awarded to beings who meet the cognitive requirements, separated in all its myriad forms by its inherent uniqueness? Or should we rather think of it like a substance, shared across the world, inherently sui generis for each beholder, and still also connected, the same way we all come from the same matter?

Are we limited to only our portion of consciousness, that from our perspective is limited to us, while consciousness extends itself through the world (similar the way mycelium creates a web through trees). Are we limited to our own consciousness, the same way we are limited to the dimensions we are allowed to perceive, forced to assume it is all there is?





One could argue that although sentience is a continuous process, as our nervous systems remain active, consciousness on the contrary is more fragmental, more discrete. It gives the impression of a stream, but instead consists of peaks of awareness, occasionally triggered, giving the illusion of a constant state, a seam following time.

As living bodies are dictated by evolution, fitted for survival in their environment, it is fair to ask what is the purpose of consciousness. After all, we could have the same cognition, answer to

physical and emotional stimuli, and develop the social mechanisms that make our species thrive, all without this first person perspective, without this awareness, this unique sensation.

How did it appear, could it be an accident, a mistake, a surprise in the development of life, or instead its entire purpose? Was life developed to somehow allow the universe to feel itself?

Could it be that consciousness doesn't only appear in complex lifeforms,

but instead is present in every part of the world,

like tiny bits of proto-consciousness waiting to assemble in a more cohesive structure?



So the self resides  
somewhere on the  
fluctuating and moving point  
of intersection between the  
body, experience, memory,  
and consciousness.

All these aspects are  
interconnected,  
essentially co-creating  
each other.

From this logic,  
humanity as a whole  
could also be  
considered a self,

each of us acting as a  
building block of a higher  
'being', the same way all our  
individual cells come  
together to make us.

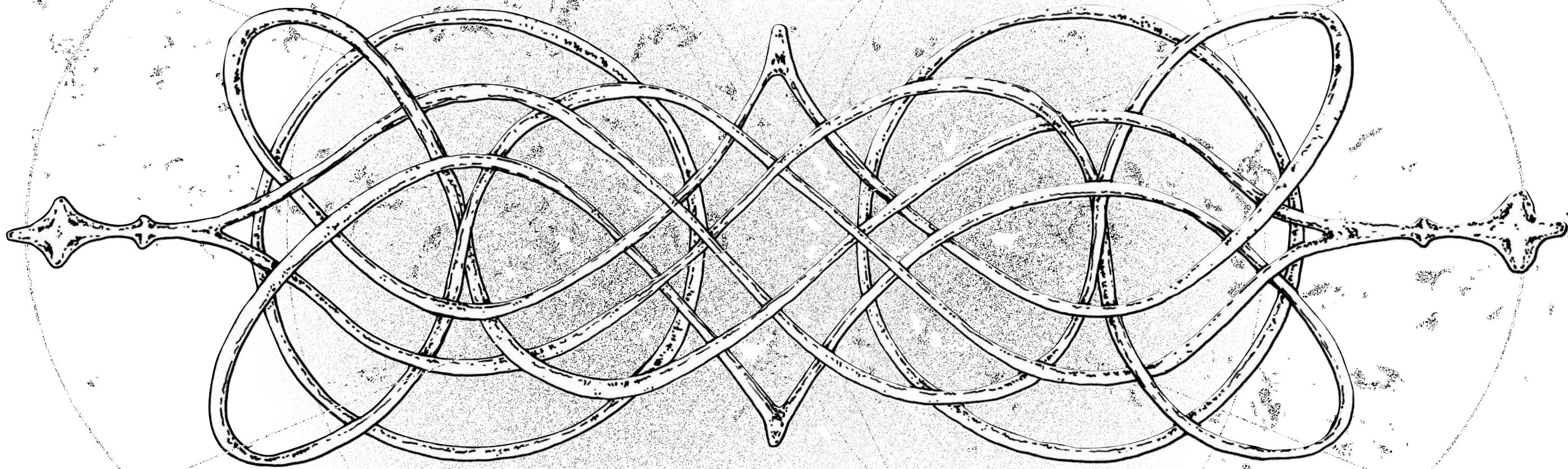
Perhaps this pattern  
could be applied to even  
bigger entities we are not  
aware of, beyond our world,  
to which our universe  
would be a single atom?

And maybe there  
is an entire universe  
within each atom that  
makes my self.



Sometimes my self momentarily disappears (in my awake moments), leaving only an organic body with tiny bits of consciousness. The mirror no longer reflects me, but a moving mass of flesh.

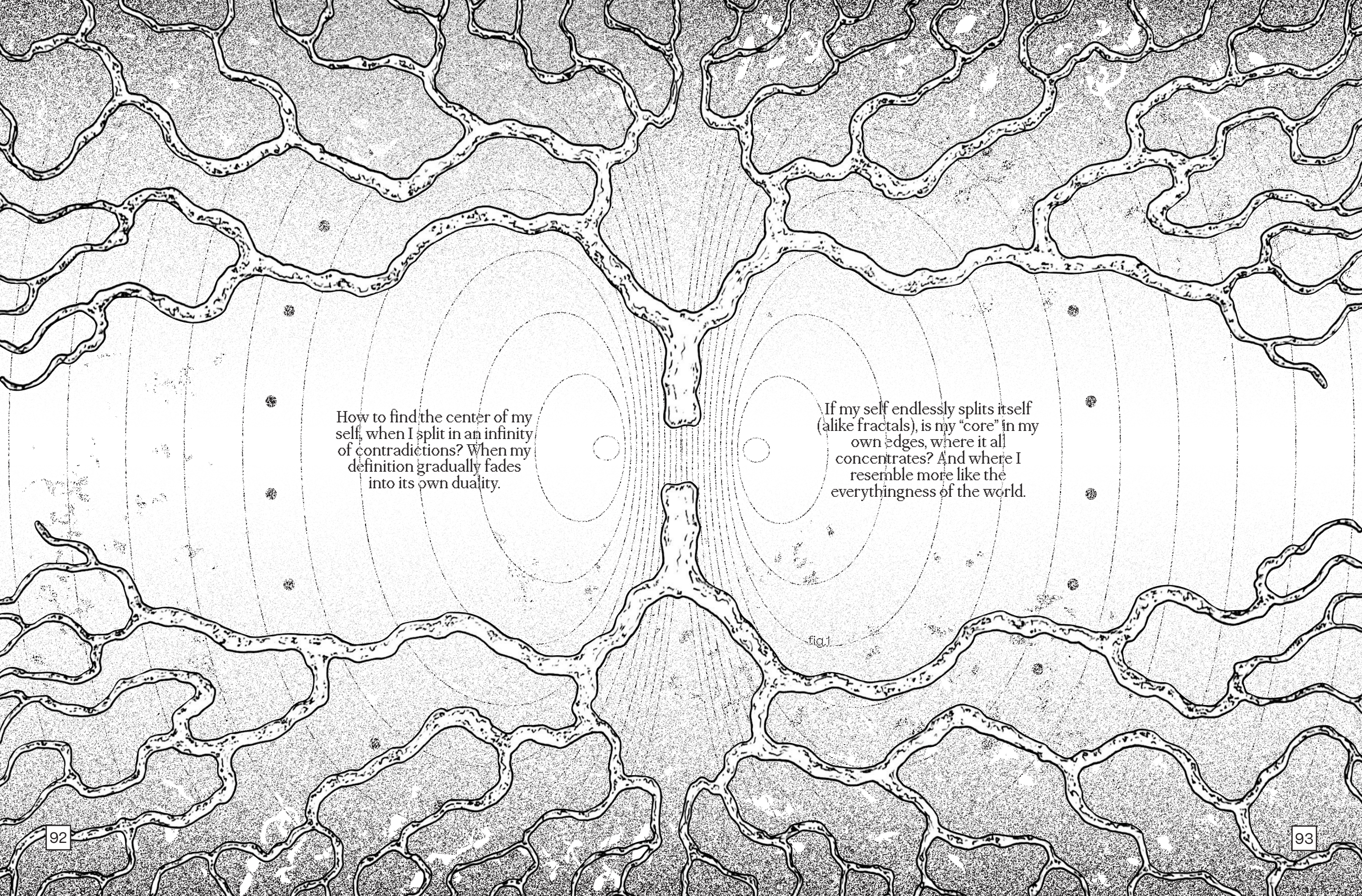
As the stability of my sense of identity often fluctuates, saying I "feel a self", or that I am "in self" - or even feeling "inselfated" (if I could make up my own words), could describe better the changes and my interaction with my perception of self.



Maybe my confusion with "finding" the self also comes from language. By saying I have a self, the same way I have a body, I assume it is a definite quality of my being, more than an impression. Maybe if we expressed the self more like we describe emotions, our understanding of ourselves would be much different.

When I find myself in a feeling of non selfness - whether it is depersonalisation or another kind of feeling - it feels like my being is still present but the "I" disappears. In these moments, saying I am "feeling unselfated" might be a better expression of my current state rather than questioning if I have a self or not.





How to find the center of my  
self, when I split in an infinity  
of contradictions? When my  
definition gradually fades  
into its own duality.

If my self endlessly splits itself  
(alike fractals), is my "core" in my  
own edges, where it all  
concentrates? And where I  
resemble more like the  
everythingness of the world.

fig.1



Through the unfolding of my thoughts, I can almost witness my dualities tearing up, not being sure where I stand. As I discern my own division, it's hard to tell how I am, what I am, who I am.

As I see myself within two opposite sides, I can also see how this sense of self is both real and unreal, lying in between the physical and immaterial. And all these inner polarities are entangled.



To what extent am I one who wants to be right or one who wants to believe? to be sure, or to be wise? To be kind, or accurate?



This splitting and tension also takes place in time. Do I embody in the present what I could become in the future, the way I embody traces of the past? How much is my potential (for any outcome) part of my current self? Do they somehow co-exist in a funny bend of spacetime?



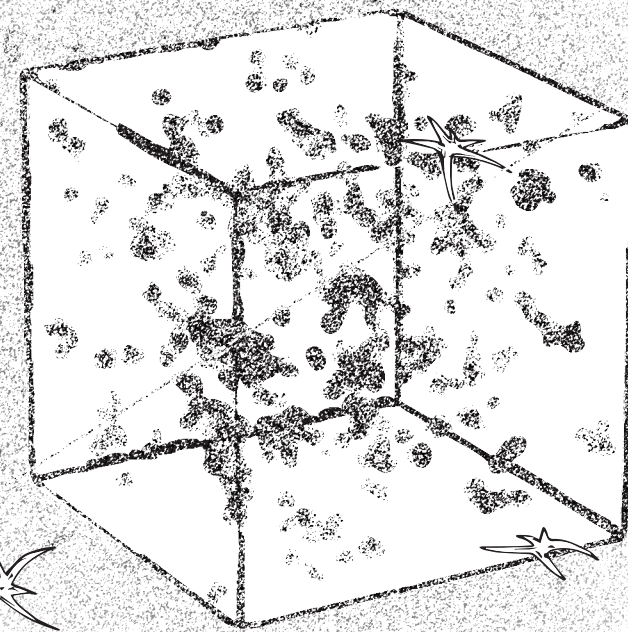
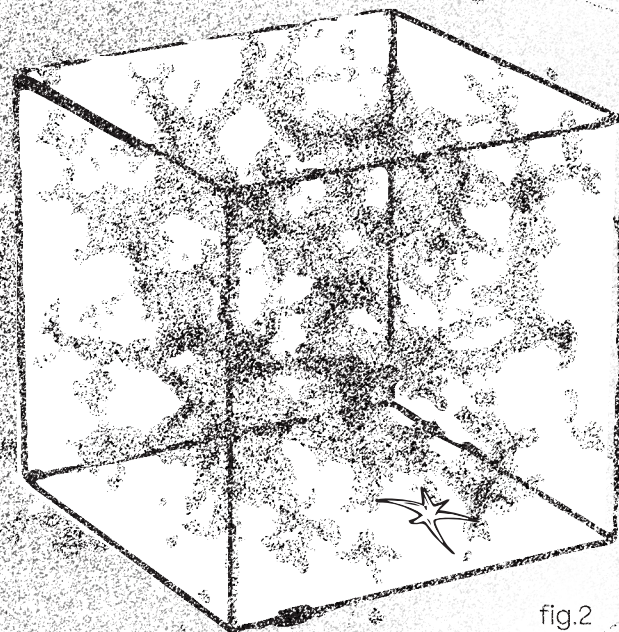
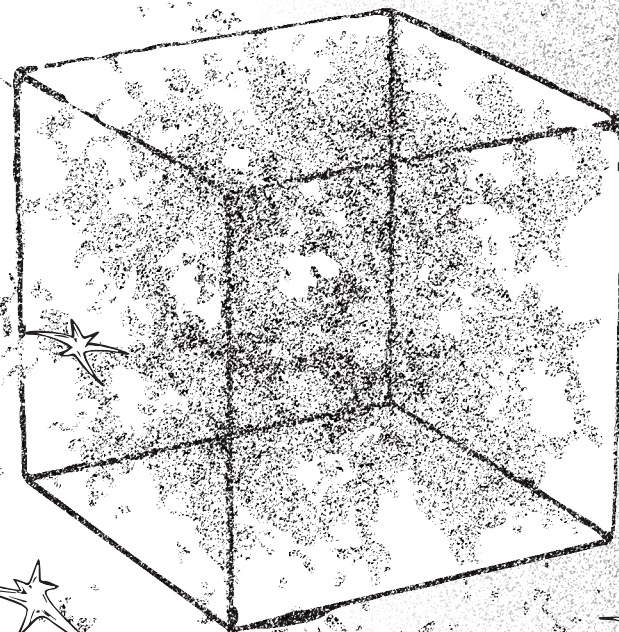
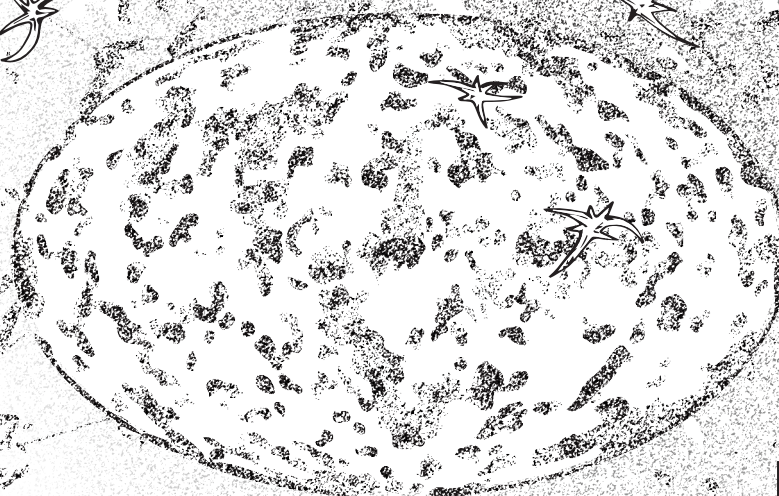
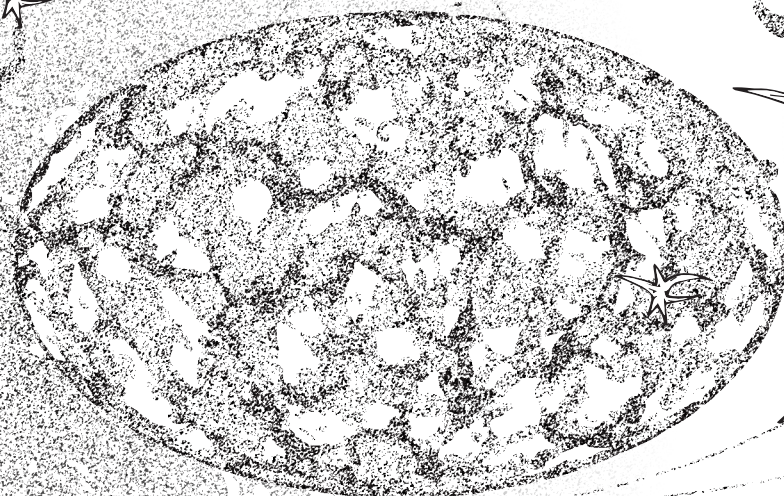
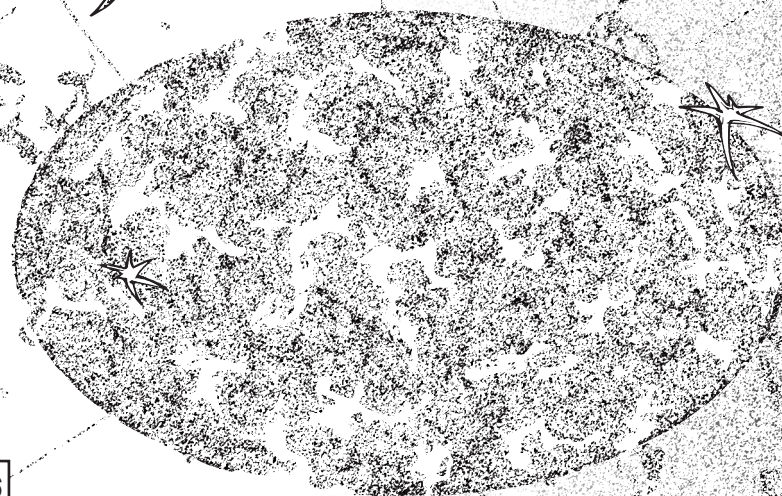


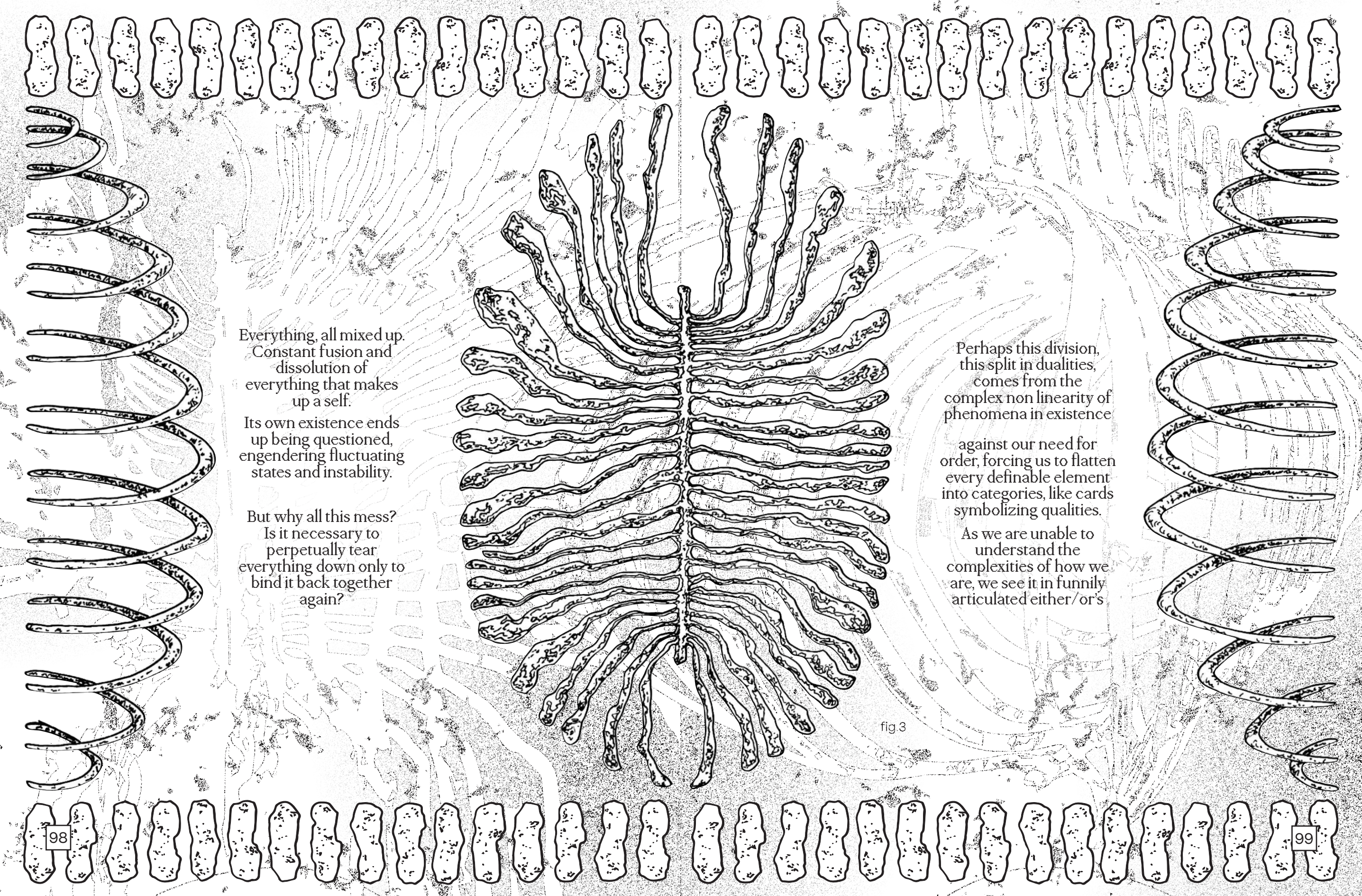
fig.2

Why is it that the more I  
look, the more I seem to  
shatter in infinite  
fragments? Is my own  
"substance" similar to the  
cosmic foam?

An amalgamation of clusters,  
galaxies, stars particles,  
seemingly grouped together  
and yet all separated. Is my  
self as cold and empty as our  
cosmos, a bit lonely and yet  
also filled up with so many  
stars?







Everything, all mixed up.  
Constant fusion and  
dissolution of  
everything that makes  
up a self.

Its own existence ends  
up being questioned,  
engendering fluctuating  
states and instability.

But why all this mess?  
Is it necessary to  
perpetually tear  
everything down only to  
bind it back together  
again?

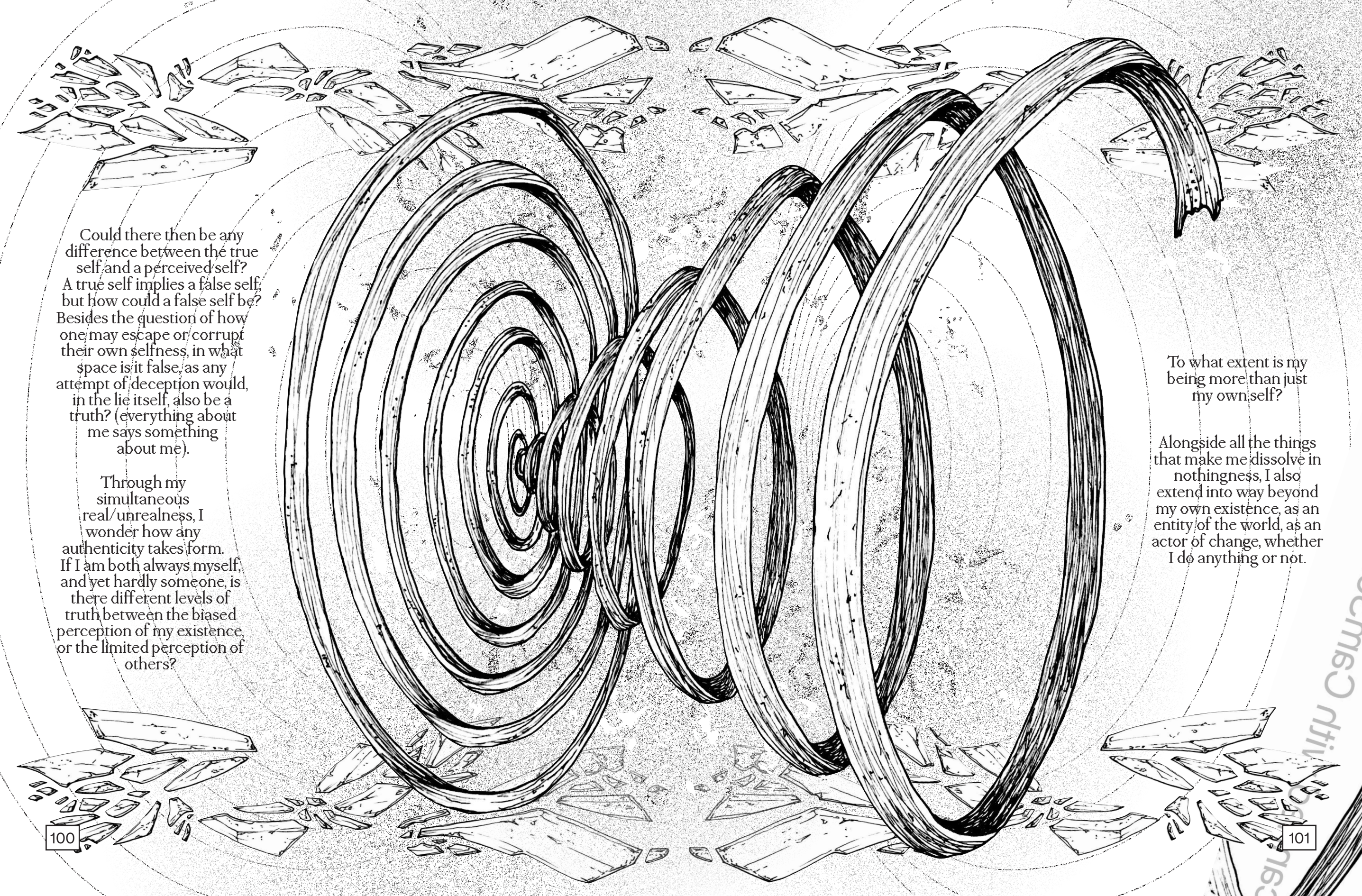
Perhaps this division,  
this split in dualities,  
comes from the  
complex non linearity of  
phenomena in existence

against our need for  
order, forcing us to flatten  
every definable element  
into categories, like cards  
symbolizing qualities.

As we are unable to  
understand the  
complexities of how we  
are, we see it in funnily  
articulated either/or's

fig.3





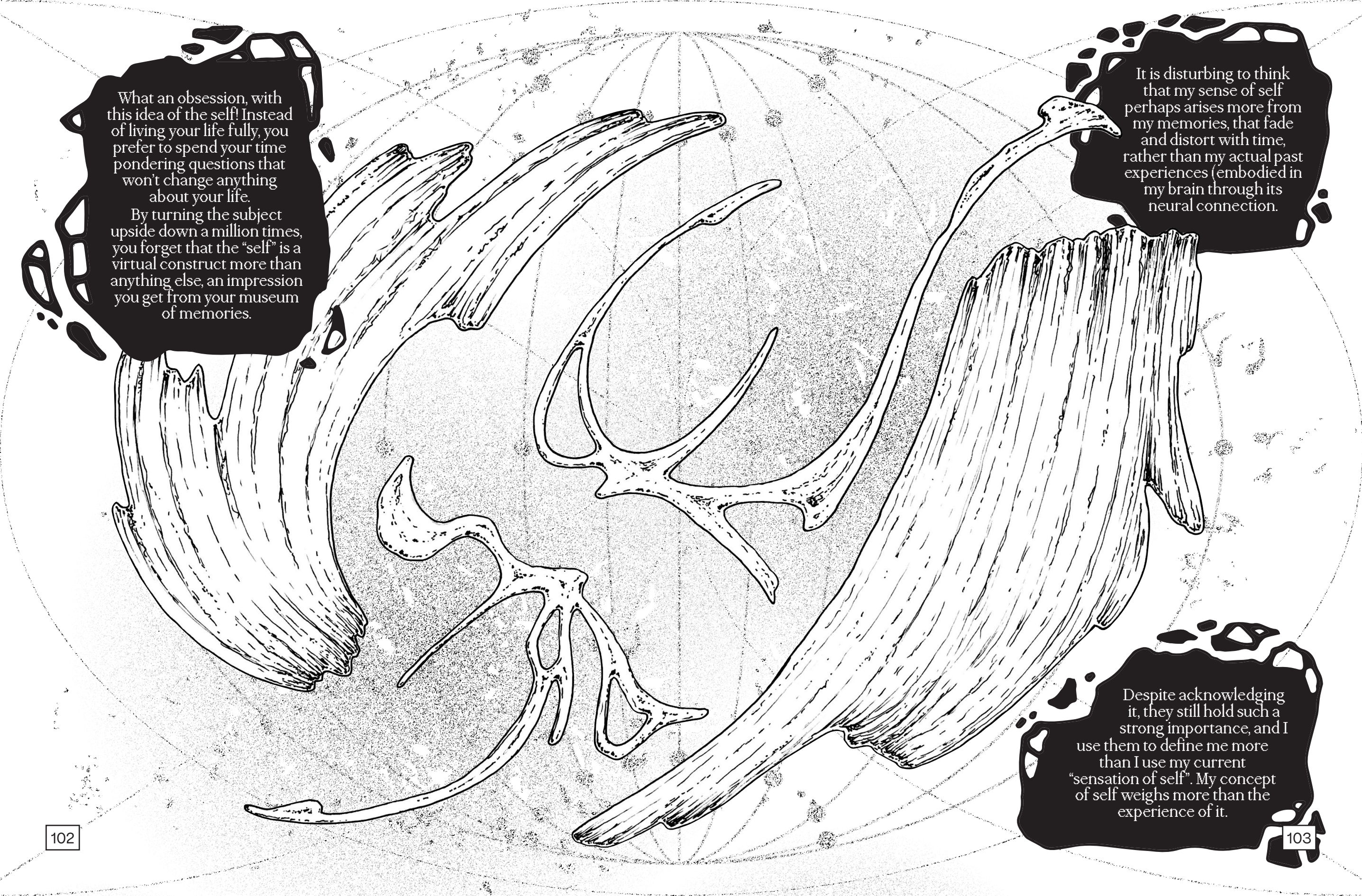
Could there then be any difference between the true self and a perceived self? A true self implies a false self, but how could a false self be? Besides the question of how one may escape or corrupt their own selfness, in what space is it false, as any attempt of deception would, in the lie itself, also be a truth? (everything about me says something about me).

Through my simultaneous real/unreality, I wonder how any authenticity takes form. If I am both always myself, and yet hardly someone, is there different levels of truth between the biased perception of my existence, or the limited perception of others?

To what extent is my being more than just my own self?

Alongside all the things that make me dissolve in nothingness, I also extend into way beyond my own existence, as an entity of the world, as an actor of change, whether I do anything or not.





What an obsession, with this idea of the self! Instead of living your life fully, you prefer to spend your time pondering questions that won't change anything about your life.

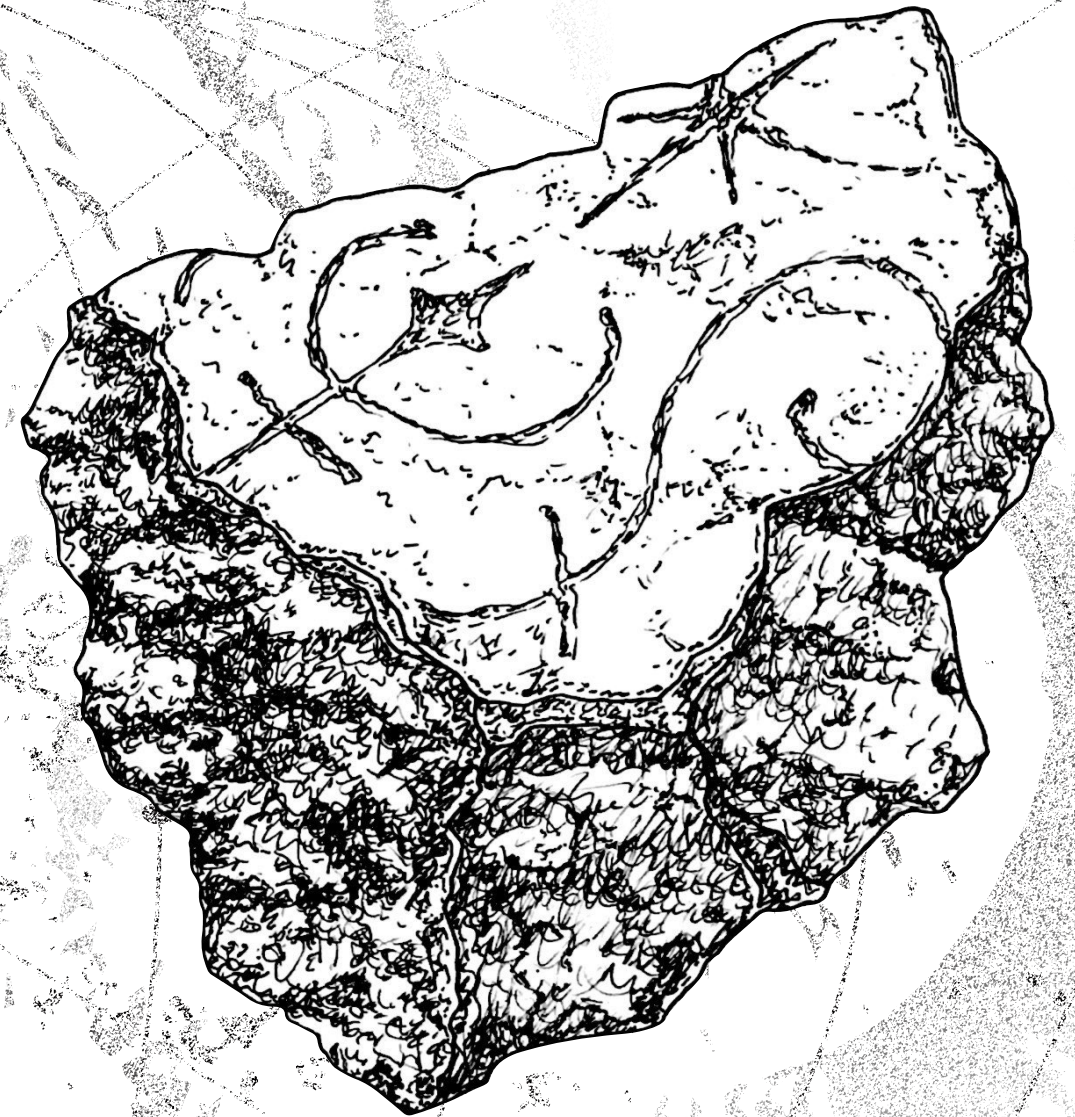
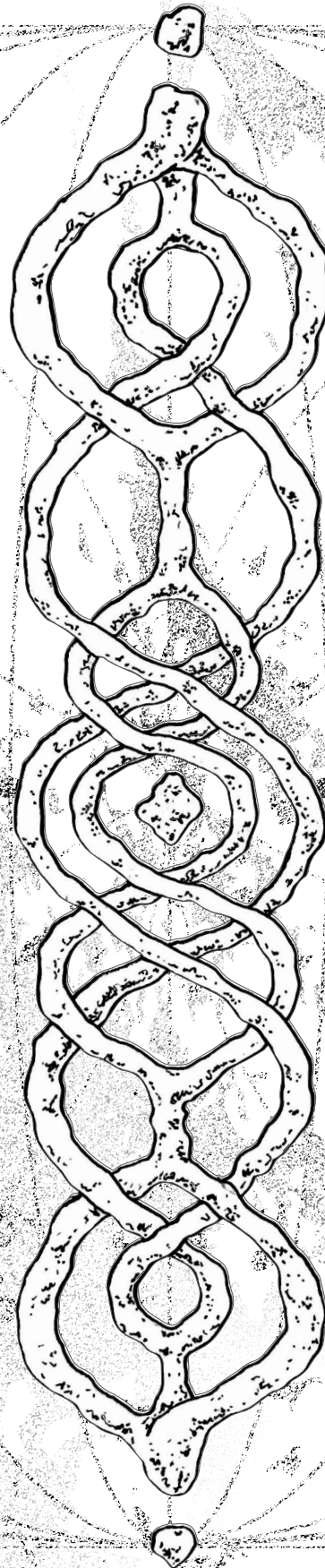
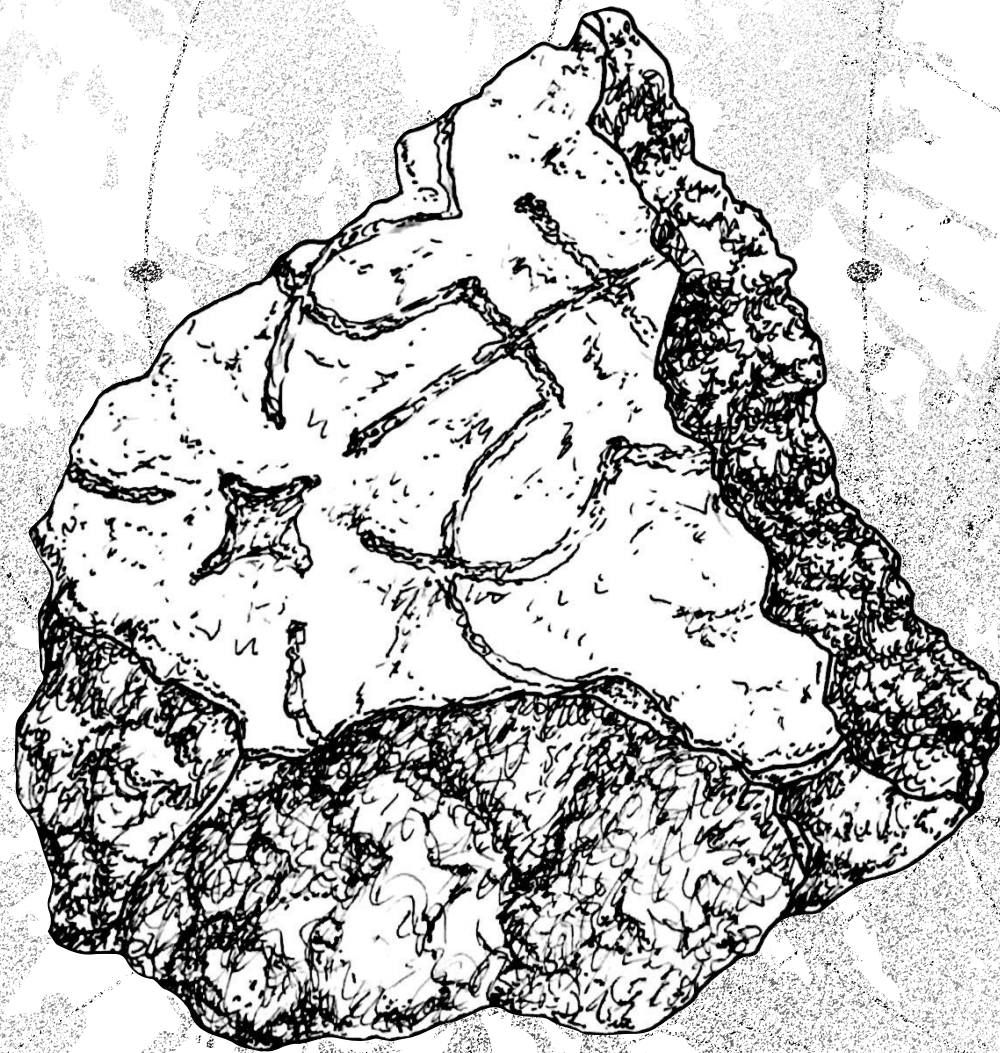
By turning the subject upside down a million times, you forget that the "self" is a virtual construct more than anything else, an impression you get from your museum of memories.

It is disturbing to think that my sense of self perhaps arises more from my memories, that fade and distort with time, rather than my actual past experiences (embodied in my brain through its neural connection).

Despite acknowledging it, they still hold such a strong importance, and I use them to define me more than I use my current "sensation of self". My concept of self weighs more than the experience of it.

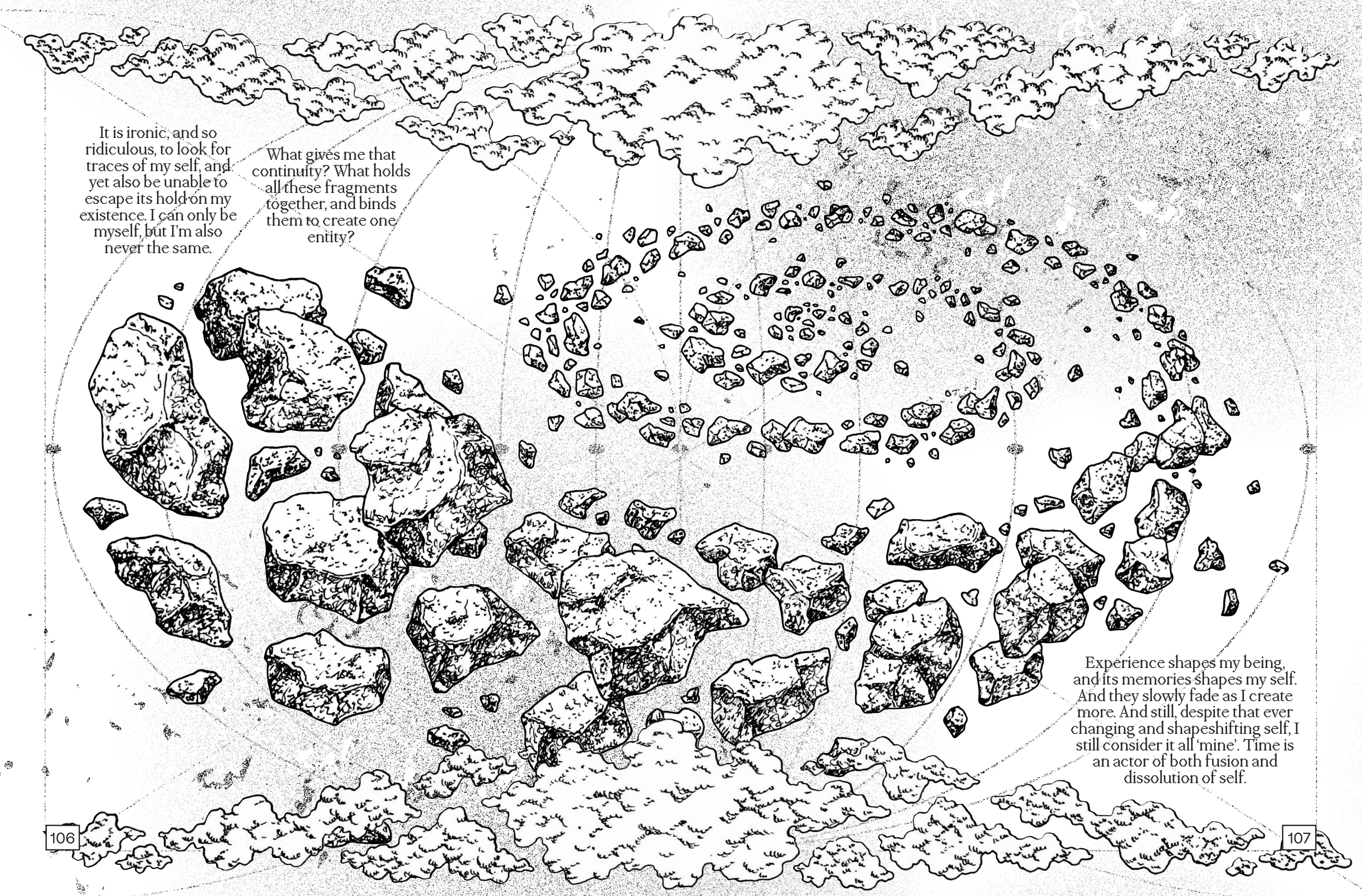


How does my "self" feel? It's almost like the self only exists in the past, where it actualizes itself as a memory. A present experience is not the self yet, but a proto-self. It only actualizes as the self once it is "past".



So my self is shaped from fragile memories? If most of my existence is forgotten, and the "memorable" moments are heavily subjected to be altered, my self becomes unreliable. Could it be that my actual experiences resemble nothing like what I remember? How big is the gap between the idea of being and the reality of it





It is ironic, and so ridiculous, to look for traces of my self, and yet also be unable to escape its hold on my existence. I can only be myself, but I'm also never the same.

What gives me that continuity? What holds all these fragments together, and binds them to create one entity?

Experience shapes my being, and its memories shapes my self. And they slowly fade as I create more. And still, despite that ever changing and shapeshifting self, I still consider it all 'mine'. Time is an actor of both fusion and dissolution of self.



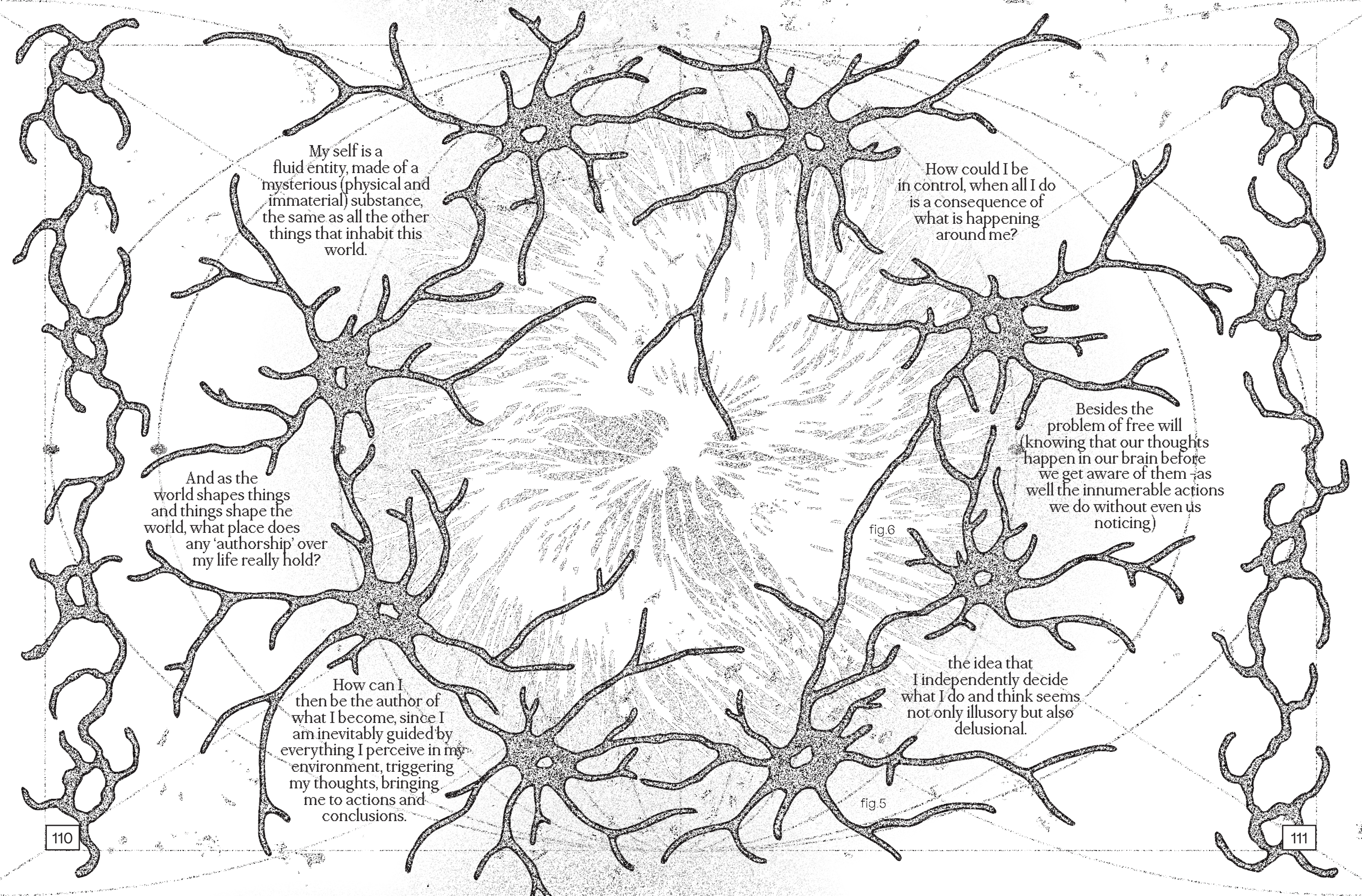
And all that experience,  
all the information gathered  
through my presence in existence,  
and the memories it creates, its  
impressions, sensations, does it  
reside in the body or the mind?

Our thoughts emerge  
from the organic body, but our  
virtual understanding of ourselves,  
the world, the experience, are  
hardly made of the same substance  
as the flesh and electric signals.

If my consciousness is  
somewhat physical, or  
inversely, if my physical  
body is somehow a  
product of the mind,  
maybe it is fair to think it is  
all (me and the entire  
universe) but one "thing",  
one substance, adopting a  
monistic view.

fig.4





My self is a  
fluid entity, made of a  
mysterious (physical and  
immaterial) substance,  
the same as all the other  
things that inhabit this  
world.

How could I be  
in control, when all I do  
is a consequence of  
what is happening  
around me?

And as the  
world shapes things  
and things shape the  
world, what place does  
any 'authorship' over  
my life really hold?

Besides the  
problem of free will  
(knowing that our thoughts  
happen in our brain before  
we get aware of them -as  
well the innumerable actions  
we do without even us  
noticing)

How can I  
then be the author of  
what I become, since I  
am inevitably guided by  
everything I perceive in my  
environment, triggering  
my thoughts, bringing  
me to actions and  
conclusions.

the idea that  
I independently decide  
what I do and think seems  
not only illusory but also  
delusional.



But this logic drives  
me towards determinism,  
flirting with the notion  
of destiny.

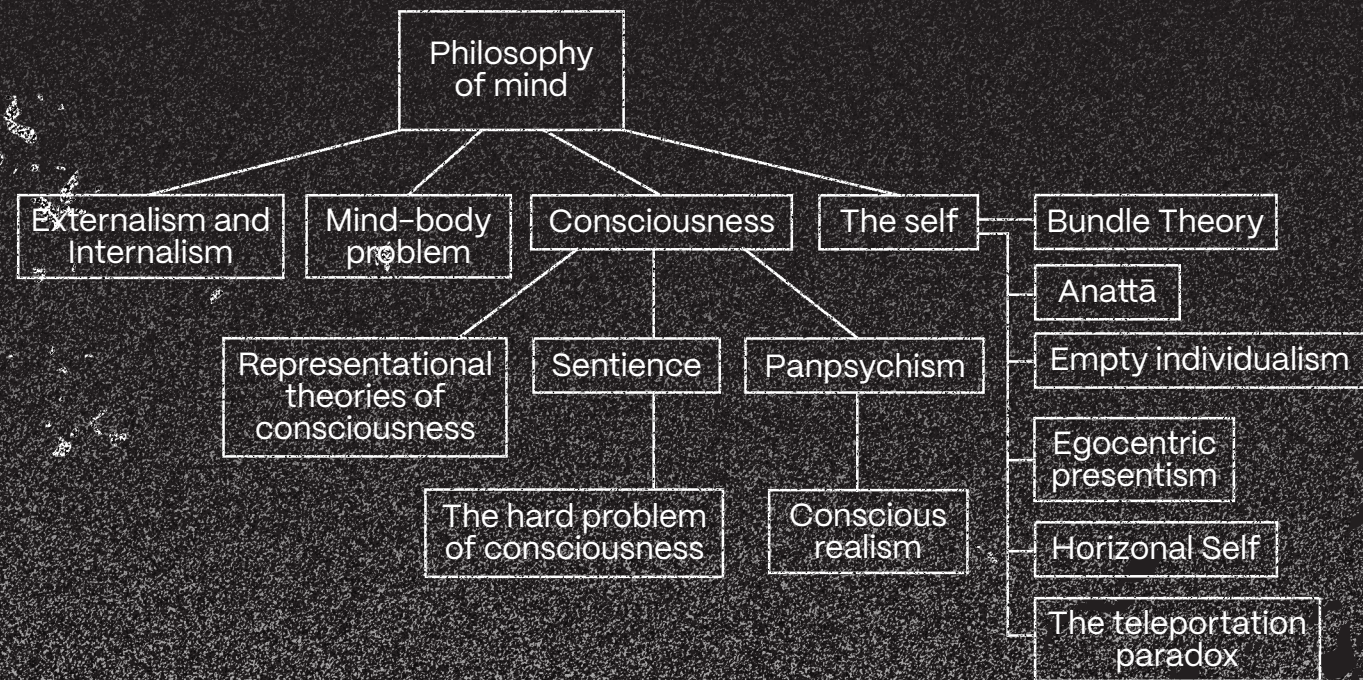
The idea that time  
is a repetitive loop, and all  
our existence is a wheel  
infinitely turning on itself,  
nicely ties with the idea that  
I will somehow always be  
what I am supposed or  
destined to be.

In a finite time realm,  
where everything, past and  
future, exist at the same time,  
only my consciousness travels  
in a linear way, through the  
multidimensional sphere of  
existence.

In the samsaric  
wheel of time, is 'pure'  
randomness an actor  
of resistance?



# Appendix



## Philosophy of mind

The philosophy of mind is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of the mind, mental states, and consciousness, and their relationship to the physical body and the external world. It explores fundamental questions about what it means to have a mind, how mental phenomena relate to physical processes in the brain, and whether mental states can be reduced to physical states. Central topics include the mind-body problem, the nature of consciousness, intentionality (the aboutness of mental states), perception, and personal identity. Philosophers of mind examine competing theories such as dualism, physicalism, functionalism, and phenomenology, each offering different accounts of how the mental and physical realms interact or coincide. The field is deeply interdisciplinary, engaging with findings from neuroscience, psychology, and cognitive science, while also raising conceptual and metaphysical questions that remain at the core of philosophical inquiry.

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## Externalism and Internalism

Two contrasting positions in philosophy, particularly in the areas of epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

**Externalism** asserts that factors outside of an individual's mind or consciousness can play a crucial role in determining the content of thoughts, beliefs, or knowledge. For example, in epistemology, externalist theories argue that an individual's belief is justified not solely by internal mental states but also by external conditions, such as the reliability of the processes or environment that produce the belief. In the philosophy of mind, externalism suggests that the mind is not confined to the brain or individual but is shaped by interaction with the external world.

On the other hand, **internalism** maintains that all mental content and justification for beliefs are determined by internal factors—such as the individual's experiences, reasoning, and cognitive states—regardless of external circumstances. In epistemology, internalists argue that knowledge and justification depend on factors accessible to the subject's awareness or mental processes. These two positions reflect different views on the nature of mental states, knowledge, and the extent to which they depend on the world beyond the individual.

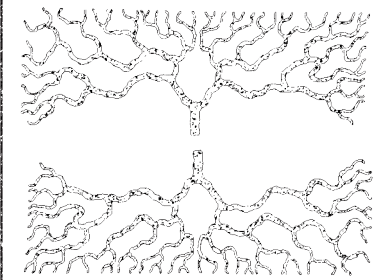


Fig.1

**Fractals** in nature are complex patterns that repeat at different scales, meaning the same shapes or structures appear whether you zoom in or out. These self-similar patterns are found throughout the natural world—like in tree branches, root systems, lightning bolts, snowflakes, and even coastlines. In roots, for example, the main root splits into smaller roots, which then split again in a similar pattern, efficiently reaching water and nutrients.

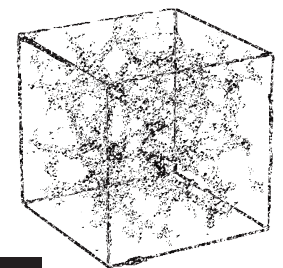


Fig.2

**Cosmic foam**, also known as the large-scale structure of the universe, refers to the vast, web-like arrangement of galaxies and matter in the cosmos. On the largest scales, the universe isn't evenly spread out—it forms a sponge-like pattern with dense clusters of galaxies (filaments and nodes) separated by enormous, empty voids.

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## The mind-body problem

A central issue in the philosophy of mind that concerns the relationship between mental phenomena—such as thoughts, emotions, and consciousness—and the physical body, particularly the brain. It asks how subjective experiences (the mind) can arise from physical processes (the body), or whether they are fundamentally distinct.

**Dualism** is a philosophical view that asserts the existence of two fundamentally distinct kinds of substances or realities: the mental and the physical. It posits that the mind (or soul) is non-physical and separate from the body. The most well-known form, Cartesian dualism, proposed by René Descartes, claims that the mind is a thinking, immaterial substance, while the body is extended and material. Dualism raises important questions about how these two substances interact and whether such interaction can be coherently explained.

**Physicalism** is the philosophical position that everything that exists is ultimately physical in nature, including mental states and consciousness. It holds that the mind is not a separate substance but is entirely dependent on, or reducible to, physical processes. According to this view, thoughts, emotions, and perceptions are the products of neurobiological activity and can, in principle, be fully explained by the laws of physics and biology. Physicalism is the dominant view in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science.

**Neutral monism** is a philosophical view that holds that the fundamental substance of reality is neither purely mental nor purely physical, but rather "neutral", forming a basic underlying essence from which both mind and matter emerge. Unlike dualism, which posits two distinct kinds of substances (mental and physical), or physicalism and idealism, which reduce one to the other, neutral monism seeks a middle path by proposing that both mental and physical properties are manifestations of a more fundamental, neutral substance or reality. This view has been associated with thinkers such as Bertrand Russell, William James, and Ernst Mach, and offers a promising framework for addressing the mind-body problem by dissolving the sharp divide between consciousness and the material world.

## Consciousness

Consciousness is the state or capacity of being aware of and able to experience thoughts, sensations, perceptions, emotions, and the external world. It involves a subjective, first-person perspective—what it feels like to be aware or to have an experience. Philosophers and scientists distinguish between different types or levels of consciousness, such as phenomenal consciousness (raw experience or qualia) and access consciousness (information available for reasoning and behavior). Despite extensive study in philosophy, neuroscience, and psychology, consciousness remains one of the most debated topics in both science and philosophy.

## Representational theories of consciousness

Theories proposing that consciousness arises from the brain's ability to represent the world in a certain way. According to this view, what we are conscious of corresponds to how our minds internally represent external objects, events, or states. These theories suggest that the quality and content of consciousness depend on the structure and function of these representations. Variants include higher-order theories, which claim that a mental state becomes conscious when it is the object of a higher-order representation, and the global workspace theory, which posits that consciousness emerges when information is made globally available to various cognitive systems. Overall, representational theories aim to explain subjective experience in terms of the brain's representational capacities, linking consciousness to the processing and organization of information.



## Sentience

Sentience refers to the capacity to have subjective experiences, particularly the ability to feel or perceive sensations, often associated with the experience of pleasure and pain. In philosophical and ethical discussions, sentience is significant because it is typically considered a key criterion for attributing moral consideration to an organism, suggesting that beings capable of experiencing suffering or well-being should be treated with moral respect. Sentience is distinct from more complex cognitive functions like reasoning or self-reflection, focusing instead on the basic, raw experience of being aware.

## The hard problem of consciousness

The hard problem of consciousness, a term coined by philosopher David Chalmers, refers to the challenge of explaining why and how subjective experience arises from physical processes in the brain. While science can describe the neural correlates of consciousness—such as which brain areas activate during certain mental states—the hard problem asks why these processes are accompanied by qualia. Unlike the "easy problems" of consciousness, which concern cognitive functions and behaviors, the hard problem remains unresolved and is central to debates about the nature of mind and consciousness.

**Qualia** are the subjective, first-person experiences that make up the felt qualities of consciousness—what it is like to see the color red, taste coffee, or feel pain. They are the raw, ineffable aspects of experience that cannot be fully captured by objective descriptions or physical explanations.

**Philosophical zombies** are hypothetical beings that are physically and behaviorally identical to humans but lack conscious experience—they have no qualia. They are used as a thought experiment to challenge physicalist accounts of consciousness. If such a being is conceivable, it suggests that physical processes alone might not be sufficient to explain why or how we have subjective experiences

## Panpsychism

Panpsychism is the philosophical view that consciousness or mental properties are fundamental and ubiquitous in the natural world. According to this perspective, all matter possesses some form of consciousness or experience, however basic. While this does not imply that all things have minds or thoughts like humans, it suggests that even elementary particles may have primitive experiential qualities. Panpsychism offers an alternative to both materialism and dualism by attempting to bridge the gap between mind and matter, proposing that consciousness is not an emergent property of complex systems but a fundamental aspect of reality itself. Contemporary interest in panpsychism has grown in response to the hard problem of consciousness, with philosophers like Galen Strawson and Philip Goff advocating for its potential to explain how subjective experience arises in a physical world.

## Conscious Realism

Conscious realism is a metaphysical theory proposed by cognitive scientist Donald Hoffman, which posits that consciousness is the fundamental fabric of reality, rather than space, time, or matter. According to this view, the physical world as we perceive it is not objective or ultimate, but rather a kind of symbolic interface—shaped by evolution—that allows conscious agents to interact and survive. Instead of assuming that consciousness emerges from the brain or physical processes, conscious realism reverses the traditional materialist perspective: it suggests that physical objects and space-time emerge from interactions among conscious agents. In this framework, consciousness is not localized or confined but networked, forming the basis of what we interpret as the external world.



# The Self

The concept of the self is a central yet contested notion in both philosophy and science. Philosophically, the self is often understood as the subject of experience—the entity that perceives, thinks, and acts. Various traditions offer competing accounts: essentialist views posit a core, unchanging self (such as the soul or ego), while non-essentialist perspectives deny the existence of any enduring substance underlying our experiences. Contemporary debates explore whether the self is an illusion, a narrative construct, or a relational phenomenon shaped by language and society.

## Bundle Theory

Hume famously argues that there is no underlying, unchanging self beyond the bundle of perceptions we experience. When he introspects, he finds only a succession of fleeting sensations, emotions, and thoughts—not a stable or unified "self." This has come to be known as the "bundle theory" of the self: the self is nothing more than a collection or bundle of perceptions in constant flux. Hume's view challenges the notion of a permanent, substantial ego and anticipates later skeptical and non-essentialist approaches to personal identity.

## Anattā

Anattā (or Anātman) is a core concept in Buddhist philosophy that refers to the doctrine of non-self—the idea that there is no unchanging, permanent self or soul within individuals. Contrary to many philosophical and religious traditions that posit a stable inner essence or identity, Buddhism holds that what we conventionally call the "self" is actually a dynamic aggregation of five impermanent components (the skandhas): form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. These elements are in constant flux, and clinging to the illusion of a fixed self is seen as a root cause of suffering.

## Empty Individualism

Empty individualism is a philosophical view about personal identity which holds that each conscious moment is a distinct, isolated self, with no true persistence of identity over time. According to this perspective, there is no enduring subject that exists from one moment to the next—each experience belongs to a different "self," even if there is psychological or physical continuity. According to empty individualism, what we typically consider to be "the self" is merely a transient collection of experiences and perceptions without any enduring substance or essence, and the idea of a persistent, unique individual is seen as a cognitive construct, and identity is fluid rather than fixed.

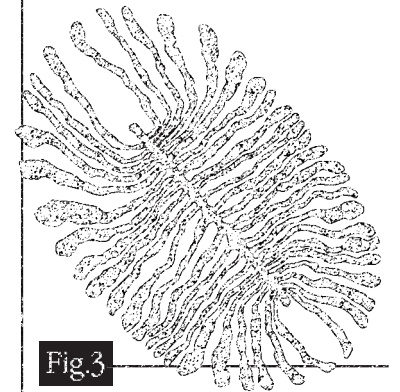


Fig. 3

**Bark beetles** are small insects that burrow into the bark of trees to lay their eggs. As the larvae hatch and tunnel outward, they create intricate, branching patterns beneath the bark, often resembling delicate etchings or tree-like fractals. These patterns can damage or kill trees, especially during infestations.

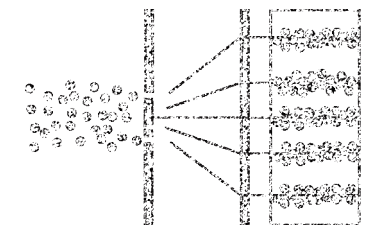


Fig. 4

**The double slit experiment** is a famous physics experiment that shows light and particles like electrons can behave as both waves and particles. When passed through two narrow slits, they create an interference pattern on a screen—evidence of wave behavior. But if observed, they act like particles, revealing the strange, dual nature of quantum mechanics.



## Egocentric Presentism

Introduced by Caspar Hare, egocentric presentism is the philosophical view that only one's own present experiences are real. According to this position, the past, the future, and the experiences of other beings are not ontologically on par with one's current, first-person experience. This view radicalizes solipsism by grounding reality exclusively in the immediacy of one's own present awareness.

Hitoshi Nagai explores the metaphysical significance of the first-person perspective as central to understanding the nature of the self. He argues that the self cannot be adequately explained from an external, third-person viewpoint; instead, it must be approached from the irreducible immediacy of subjective experience. For Nagai, the first-person perspective is not just one viewpoint among others, but a defining structure of selfhood—a standpoint that grounds personal identity and gives coherence to the experience of being.

For further reading:

Facing up to the problem of consciousness, 1995, David Chalmers  
What Is It Like to Be a Bat?, 1974, Thomas Nagel

Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism, 2006,  
Galen Strawson

The Case Against Reality, 2019, Donal Hoffman  
Dream, Death and the Self, 2007, J.J. Valberg

## The Horizontal Self

Valberg argues that the self is not a discrete object within experience but rather the horizon or limit of experience itself—the unlocatable point from which the world is disclosed. In this view, the self is not found within the contents of consciousness but is instead what allows for the appearing of those contents. It is akin to the "frame" within which all experiences occur, but which itself is never experienced directly. This horizontal self is inseparable from what Valberg calls the personal horizon, the felt sense of being at the center of one's own world.

## The teleportation paradox

A thought experiment that raises questions about personal identity and continuity of self. It typically involves a scenario in which a person is teleported by having their body scanned, destroyed, and perfectly reconstructed elsewhere using identical matter. The paradox asks: *Is the person who arrives at the destination the same individual who was teleported, or merely a perfect copy?*

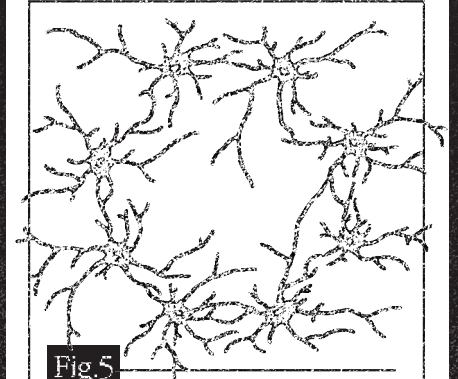


Fig 5

**Synapses** are the tiny junctions where neurons communicate with each other or with other cells. They transmit signals using chemical messengers called neurotransmitters, allowing the brain and nervous system to process information, control the body, and form thoughts and memories.

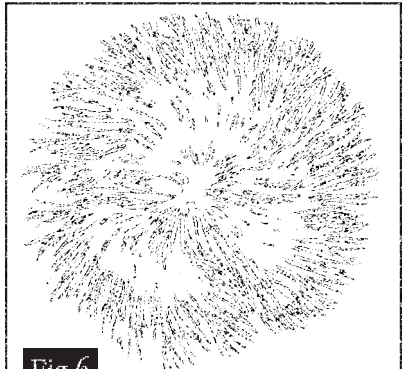


Fig 6

**Mycelium** is the underground network of thread-like structures (called hyphae) that makes up the main body of fungi. It grows through soil or decaying matter, breaking down organic material and recycling nutrients. Mycelium also connects plants in a "wood wide web," allowing them to share water, nutrients, and signals, playing a vital role in ecosystems.





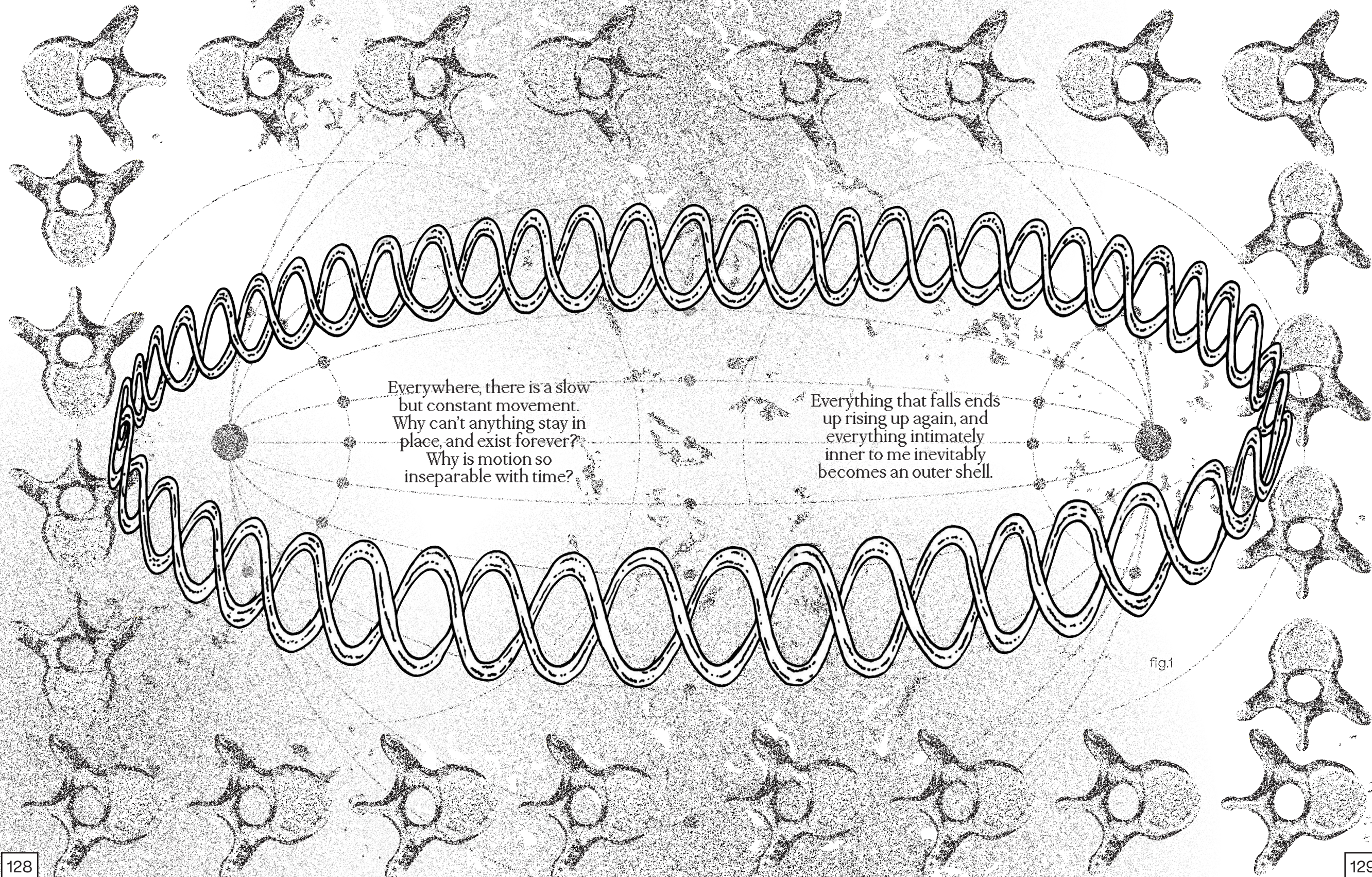
On the map of time, are  
you a point, or a line?



# Cycles of growth and decay







Everywhere, there is a slow  
but constant movement.  
Why can't anything stay in  
place, and exist forever?  
Why is motion so  
inseparable with time?

Everything that falls ends  
up rising up again, and  
everything intimately  
inner to me inevitably  
becomes an outer shell.

fig.1



As the day  
turns to night, and  
the end of the world  
births a new one, it  
appears that with  
death comes life,

everything forms  
and dissolves, and I  
get motion sick from  
the eternal cycle of  
existence,

So foolish from  
a tiny creature like me,  
barely able to perceive  
even a glimpse of the  
greatness of life,

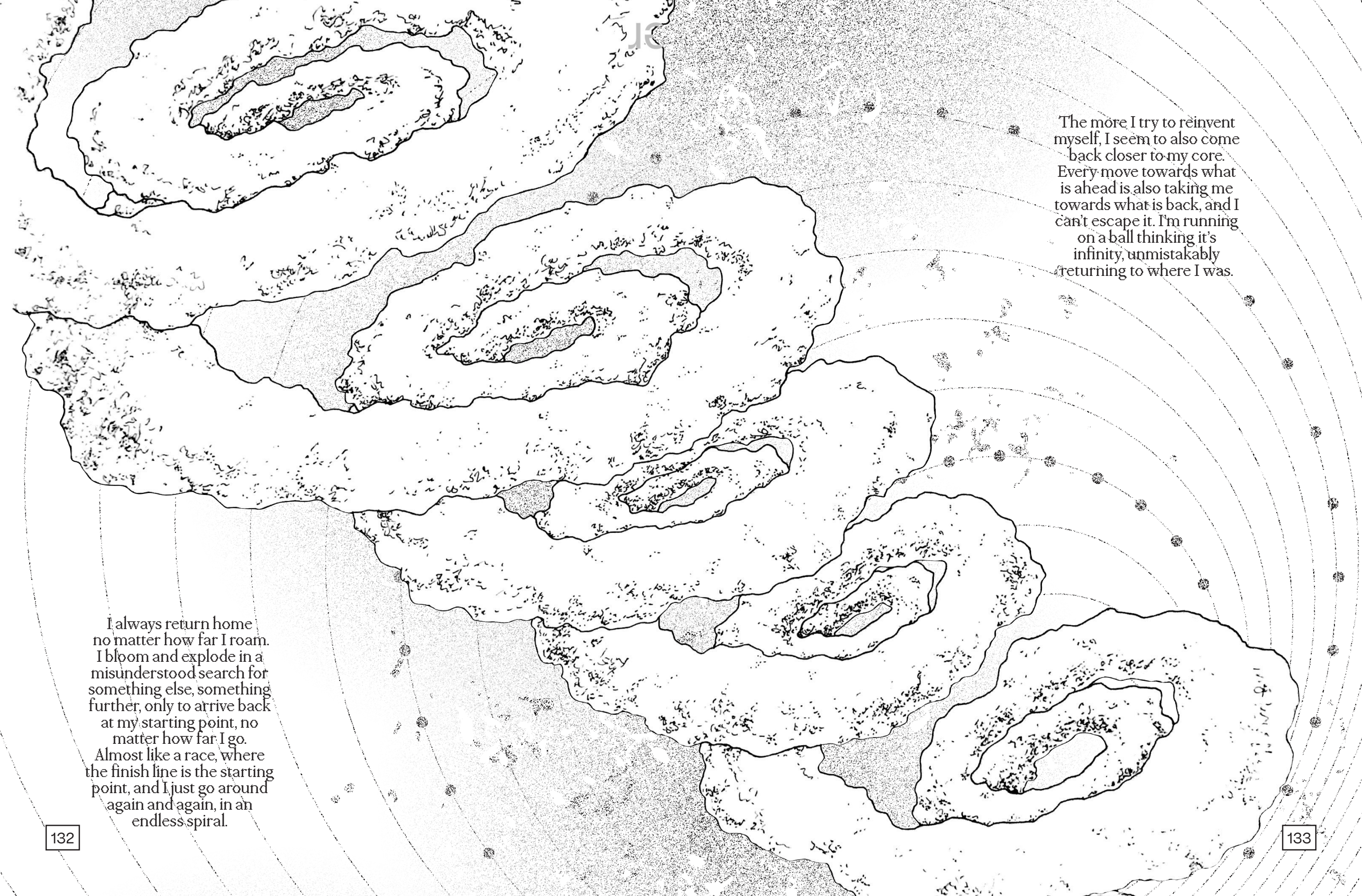
to feel entitled  
to complain that  
it's moving a bit  
too much.

And yet, knowing  
that what I am able  
to see is like a grain  
of sand in front of an  
ocean of dunes,

I can't  
help but feel  
crushed yet inflated  
by the immensity of  
its beauty.

fig.2

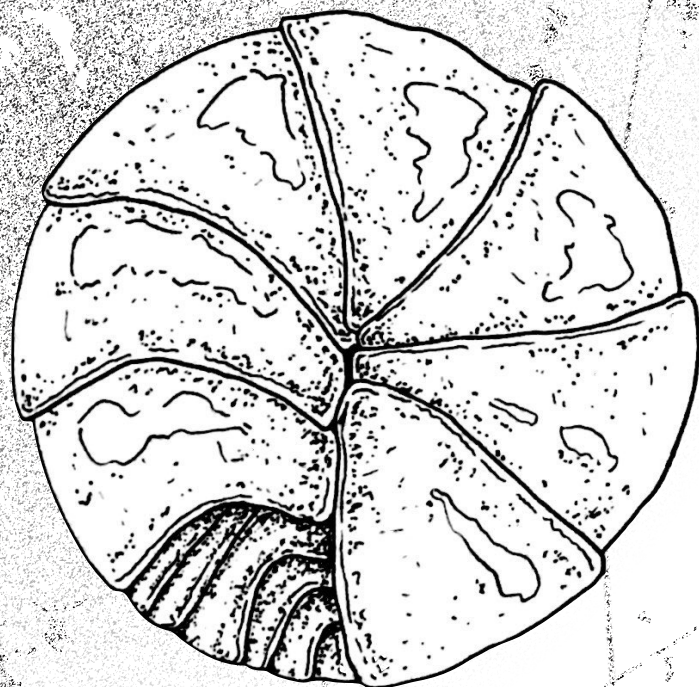




The more I try to reinvent  
myself, I seem to also come  
back closer to my core.  
Every move towards what  
is ahead is also taking me  
towards what is back, and I  
can't escape it. I'm running  
on a ball thinking it's  
infinity, unmistakably  
returning to where I was.

I always return home  
no matter how far I roam.  
I bloom and explode in a  
misunderstood search for  
something else, something  
further, only to arrive back  
at my starting point, no  
matter how far I go.  
Almost like a race, where  
the finish line is the starting  
point, and I just go around  
again and again, in an  
endless spiral.





This pattern, I find it everywhere,  
almost like it's an inherent trait of  
anything living. I see returns in my  
acts and thoughts, seasons and  
other cycles, waves in all parts of  
my being. I can see myself growing  
old and as I do so, I resemble more  
and more like a child.

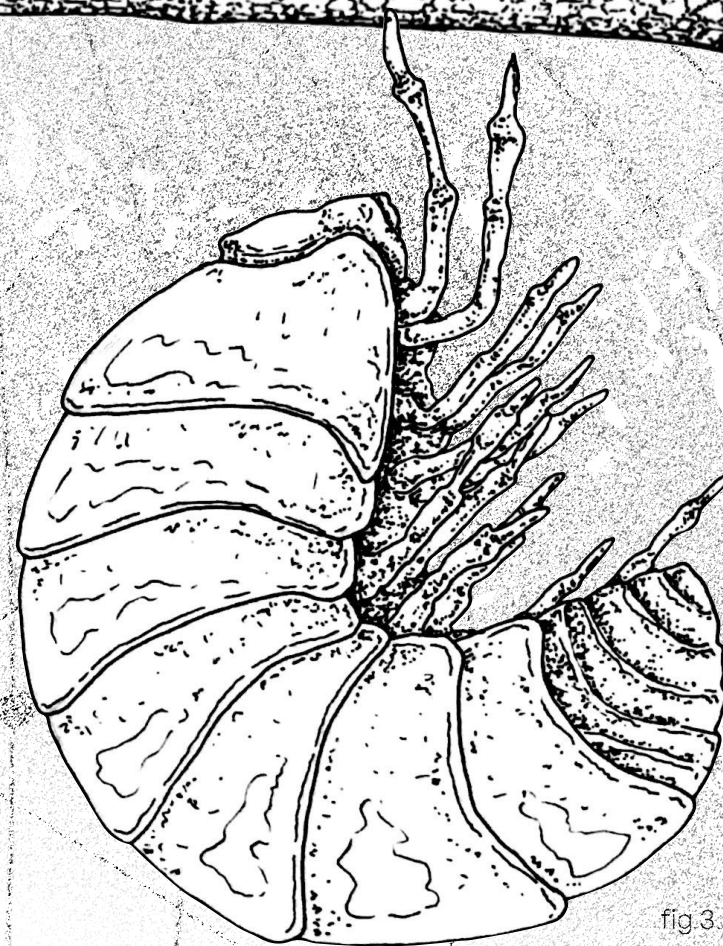
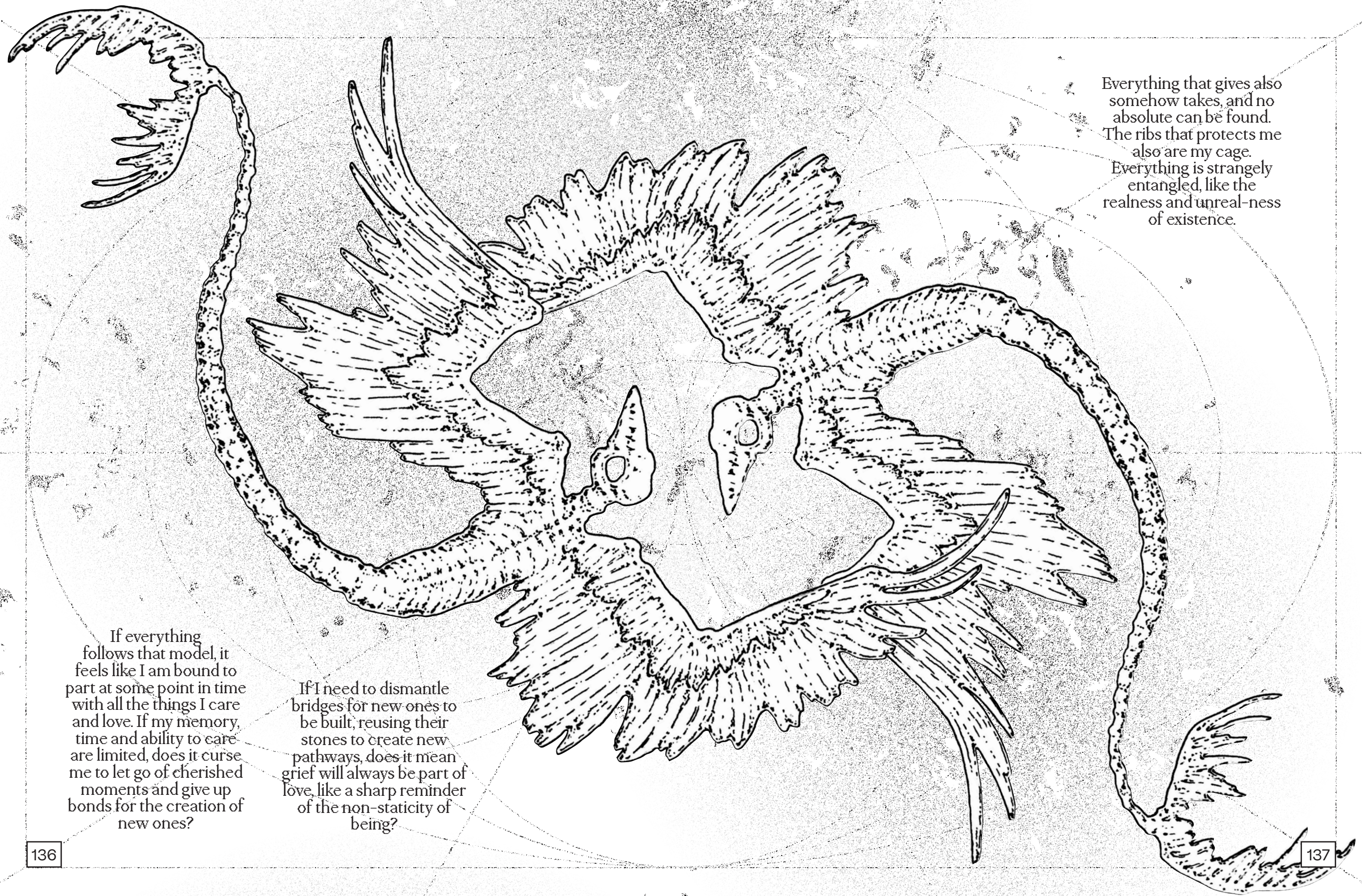


fig.3.

A constant metamorphosis, to and  
from the seed, from the larva, from  
the primordial egg. Everything that  
rises will fall, all that grows will  
decay, through the destruction a  
new life will be born.



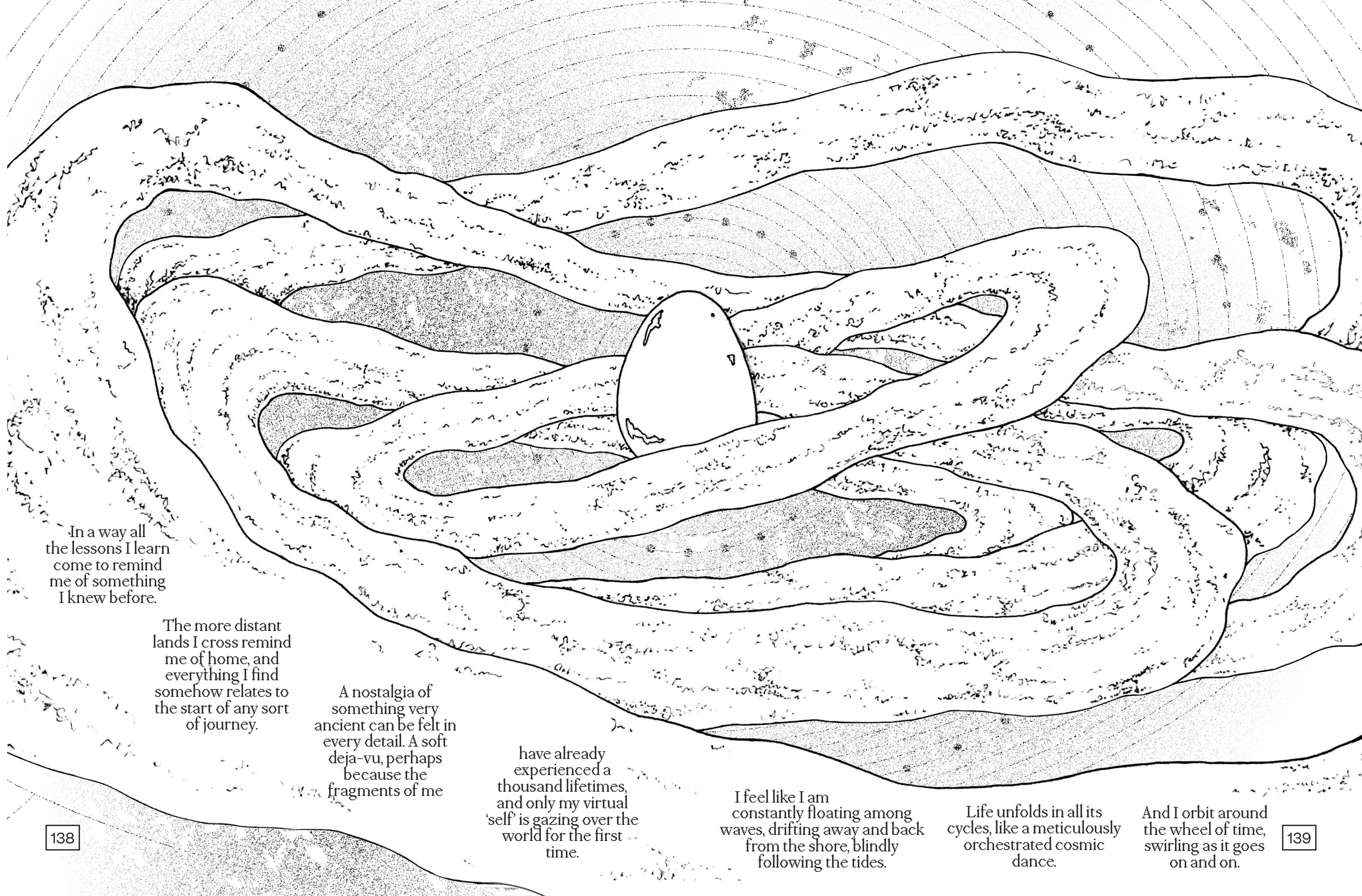


Everything that gives also  
somehow takes, and no  
absolute can be found.  
The ribs that protects me  
also are my cage.  
Everything is strangely  
entangled, like the  
realness and unreal-ness  
of existence.

If everything  
follows that model, it  
feels like I am bound to  
part at some point in time  
with all the things I care  
and love. If my memory,  
time and ability to care  
are limited, does it curse  
me to let go of cherished  
moments and give up  
bonds for the creation of  
new ones?

If I need to dismantle  
bridges for new ones to  
be built, reusing their  
stones to create new  
pathways, does it mean  
grief will always be part of  
love, like a sharp reminder  
of the non-staticity of  
being?





In a way all  
the lessons I learn  
come to remind  
me of something  
I knew before.

The more distant  
lands I cross remind  
me of home, and  
everything I find  
somehow relates to  
the start of any sort  
of journey.

A nostalgia of  
something very  
ancient can be felt in  
every detail. A soft  
deja-vu, perhaps  
because the  
fragments of me

have already  
experienced a  
thousand lifetimes,  
and only my virtual  
'self' is gazing over the  
world for the first  
time.

I feel like I am  
constantly floating among  
waves, drifting away and back  
from the shore, blindly  
following the tides.

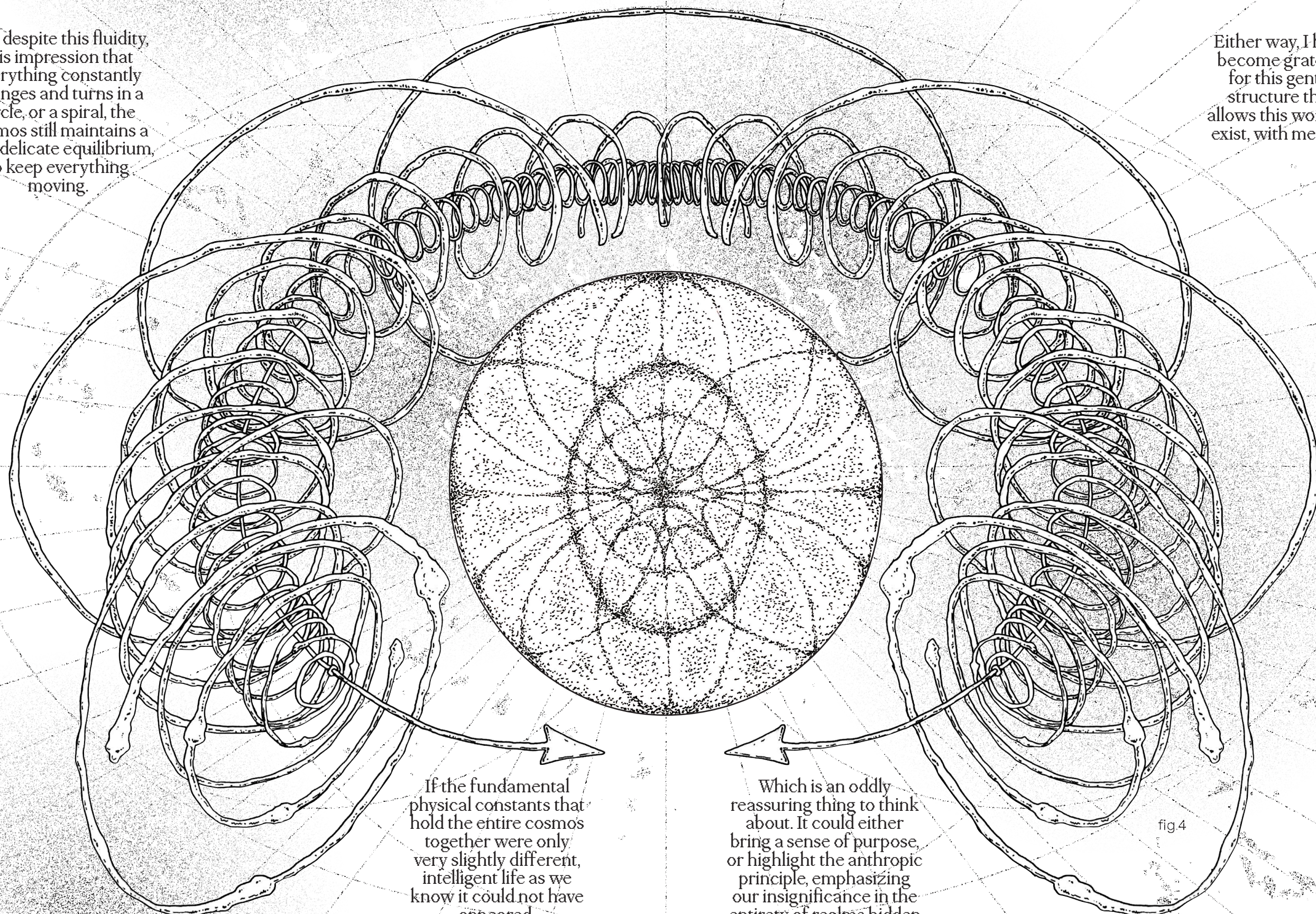
Life unfolds in all its  
cycles, like a meticulously  
orchestrated cosmic  
dance.

And I orbit around  
the wheel of time,  
swirling as it goes  
on and on.



And despite this fluidity,  
this impression that  
everything constantly  
changes and turns in a  
circle, or a spiral, the  
cosmos still maintains a  
very delicate equilibrium,  
to keep everything  
moving.

Either way, I have  
become grateful  
for this gentle  
structure that  
allows this world to  
exist, with me in it.

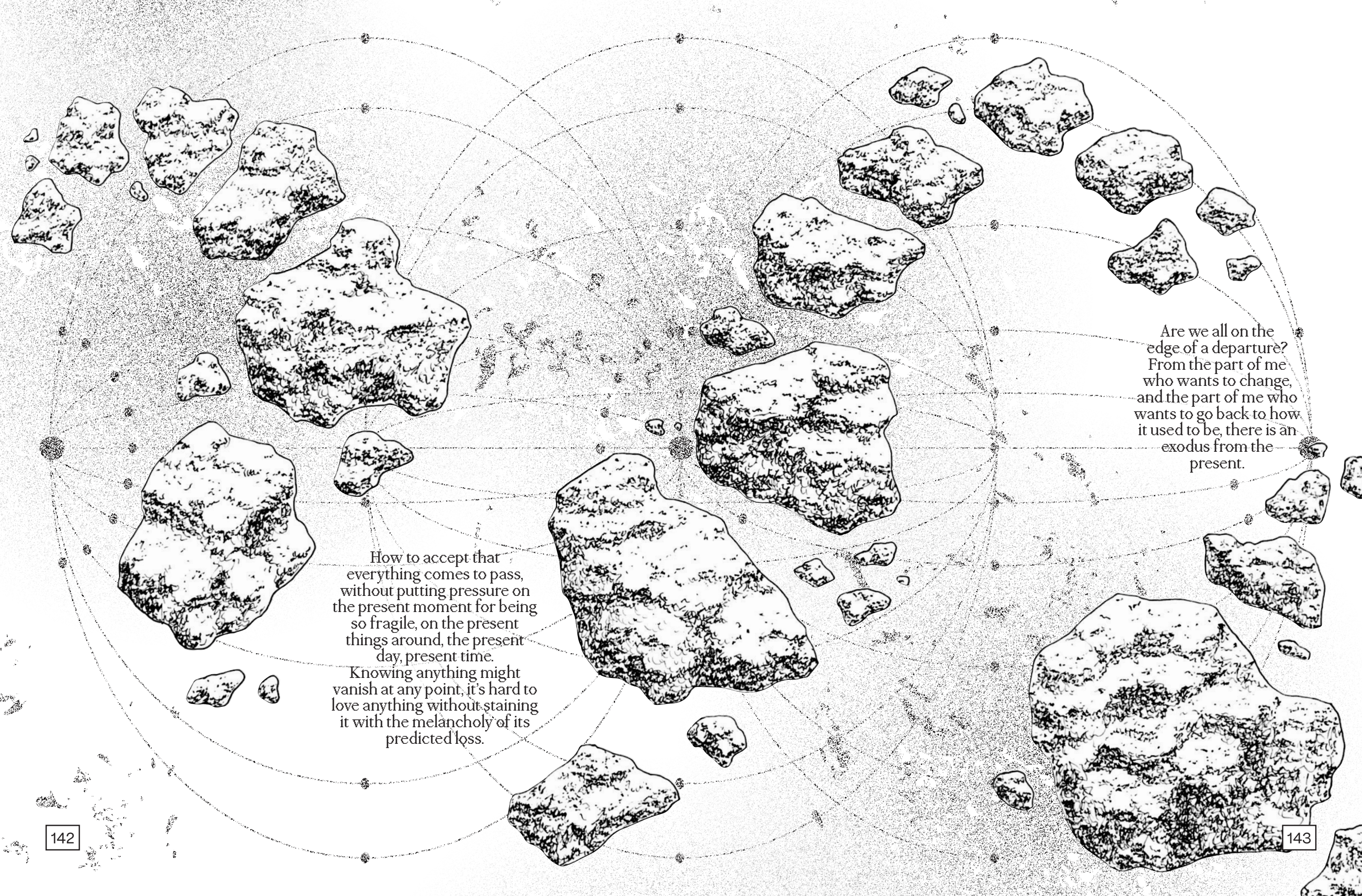


If the fundamental  
physical constants that  
hold the entire cosmos  
together were only  
very slightly different,  
intelligent life as we  
know it could not have  
appeared.

Which is an oddly  
reassuring thing to think  
about. It could either  
bring a sense of purpose,  
or highlight the anthropic  
principle, emphasizing  
our insignificance in the  
entirety of realms hidden  
from us.

fig 4

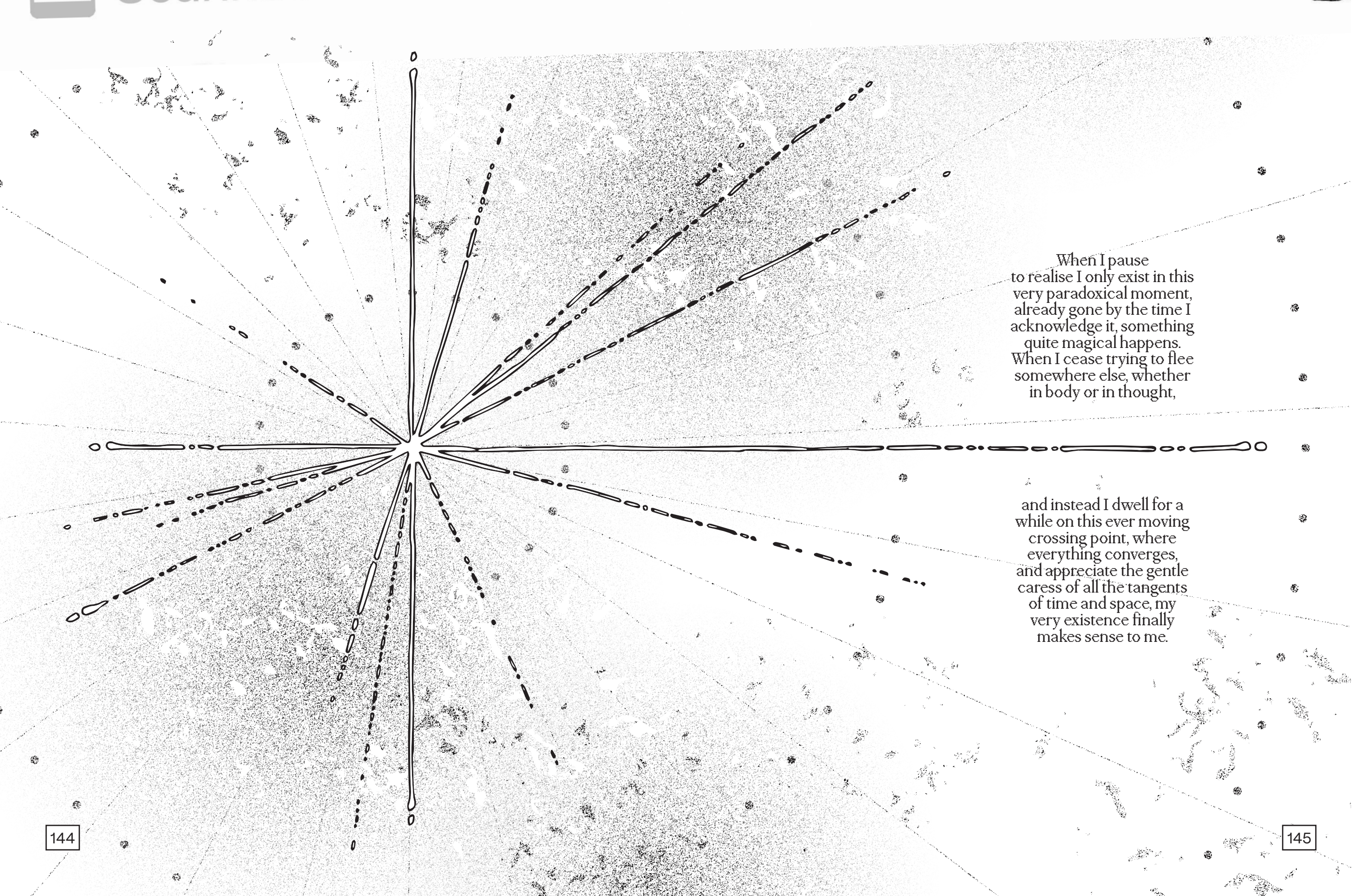




Are we all on the  
edge of a departure?  
From the part of me  
who wants to change,  
and the part of me who  
wants to go back to how  
it used to be, there is an  
exodus from the  
present.

How to accept that  
everything comes to pass,  
without putting pressure on  
the present moment for being  
so fragile, on the present  
things around, the present  
day, present time.  
Knowing anything might  
vanish at any point, it's hard to  
love anything without staining  
it with the melancholy of its  
predicted loss.



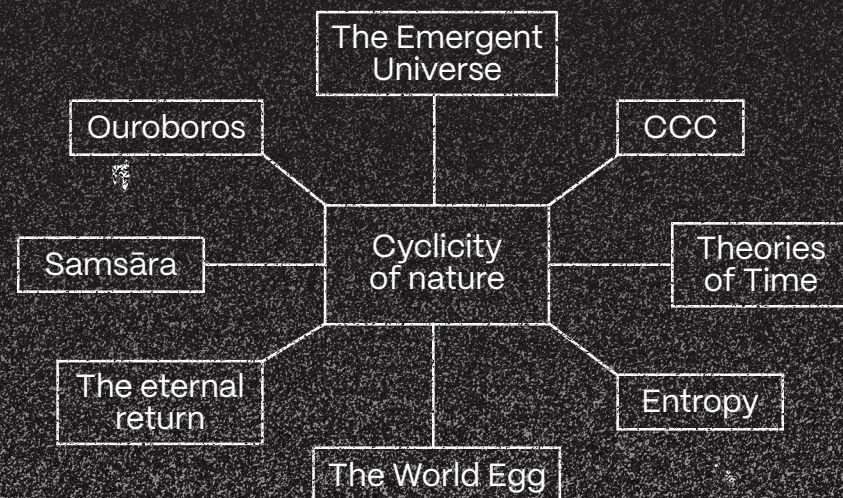


When I pause  
to realise I only exist in this  
very paradoxical moment,  
already gone by the time I  
acknowledge it, something  
quite magical happens.  
When I cease trying to flee  
somewhere else, whether  
in body or in thought,

and instead I dwell for a  
while on this ever moving  
crossing point, where  
everything converges,  
and appreciate the gentle  
caress of all the tangents  
of time and space, my  
very existence finally  
makes sense to me.



# Appendix



## Cyclicity of nature

Nature operates in a continuous and recurring rhythm, where cycles of change govern the processes of life and the environment. These cycles can be observed in the regular patterns of seasons, the life cycles of plants and animals, and the renewal of ecosystems. Day and night, growth and decay, birth and death—all are part of nature's cyclical flow. For example, the changing of the seasons reflects the earth's orbit around the sun, bringing about patterns of life, such as plant blooming, animal migration, and the shedding of leaves. Similarly, ecosystems undergo cycles of renewal, where decay leads to regeneration, ensuring the persistence of life through continuous interdependence. The cyclicity of nature speaks to the interconnectedness of all living beings, the balance of natural forces, and the inevitability of transformation. This perpetual cycle is not only a feature of biological processes but also a philosophical symbol of life's inherent rhythms, representing both impermanence and rebirth.

## The Eternal Return

The eternal return (or eternal recurrence), is philosophical and metaphysical concept that suggests the universe and all events within it are eternally recurring in an infinite cycle, repeating themselves in the exact same sequence and manner. This idea challenges the notion of linear time, proposing instead that time is cyclical and that everything—every moment, action, and experience—will recur infinitely.

The concept appears in various religious, philosophical, and spiritual traditions. In Hinduism and Buddhism, it is tied to ideas of samsāra, the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, driven by karma. Ancient cultures, like the Greeks, also entertained cyclical views of time, where the cosmos undergoes periodic rebirths.



Fig.1

**DNA strands** are long, double-helixed molecules that carry the genetic instructions for life. Each strand is made of repeating units called nucleotides, which pair up in a specific way (A with T, C with G) to form the rungs of the twisted ladder. DNA stores the code for building and maintaining organisms, passing traits from one generation to the next.



Fig.2

**Orbiting** is the motion of one object moving around another due to gravity. For example, planets orbit the Sun, and moons orbit planets. This movement creates a stable path, often elliptical, where the gravitational pull of the larger object keeps the smaller one in continuous motion around it.



## Ouroboros

The ouroboros is an ancient symbol depicting a serpent or dragon eating its own tail, forming a continuous, unbroken circle. This iconic image has been used across various cultures and philosophies to represent eternity, self-renewal, and the cyclical nature of life. The ouroboros signifies the idea of something that is both its own creator and its own destroyer, embodying the infinite cycle of creation and destruction, life and death, and beginning and end. It can also represent the unity of opposites, the constant process of recreation, and the eternal return, where endings are not final but lead to new beginnings. In alchemical traditions, the ouroboros symbolizes the cycle of transformation and the continuous process of refining or perfecting oneself. Its circular form suggests that there is no true beginning or end, but rather an ongoing process of perpetual renewal and balance.

## The World Egg

Representing the origin of the universe and the potential for creation from chaos, the world egg (or cosmic egg) expresses the primordial state of undifferentiated matter or energy, from which all existence emerges. In various mythologies, this egg is the source of the cosmos, containing within it the seeds of all things that will come into being. In many traditions, the breaking of the world egg marks the moment of creation, where the first light, life, or deities emerge, bringing order to the universe. Its symbolism is multifaceted, encompassing creation, birth, chaos, and unity.

## Samsāra

As a central concept in many Eastern religions, particularly in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, Samsāra represents the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth that all beings and phenomena undergo, sometimes described as "cycle of aimless drifting, wandering or mundane existence". It is the continuous, cyclical flow of existence, where individuals and all things are trapped in a state of impermanence, undergoing cycles of suffering and transformation. It reflects the idea that nothing is static—everything is in constant flux, and not linear but cyclical, from the individual soul or consciousness to the larger cosmos itself, with no ultimate beginning or end. The cycle of samsara is often seen as a wheel (the Bhavacakra in Buddhist tradition) that turns endlessly, with beings moving through various forms of existence based on their karma—the consequences of their actions. Samsara is not just limited to human beings but extends to all forms of life, matter, and phenomena, indicating that everything in the universe is subject to the same laws of perpetual becoming.



Fig 3

**Isopods** are small crustaceans with flattened, segmented bodies and jointed legs. They live in various environments, including oceans, freshwater, and on land. Some, like the giant deep-sea isopods, can grow quite large, while others are tiny scavengers that feed on dead plants and animals, playing important roles in ecosystems.



Fig 4

**The solar system** in motion is a dynamic system where planets, moons, asteroids, and comets orbit the Sun while the Sun itself moves through the galaxy. Each planet follows its own path, or orbit, shaped by gravity, with inner planets moving faster than those farther out. Meanwhile, the entire solar system orbits around the center of the Milky Way, traveling at about 828,000 km/h (514,000 mph), completing one galactic orbit roughly every 230 million years.



## The Emergent Universe

The Emergent Universe is a cosmological model proposing that the universe did not originate from a singularity or abrupt beginning, but instead evolved from a stable, eternal past state. In this model, the universe existed in a quasi-static or slowly expanding condition for an infinite amount of time before transitioning smoothly into the rapid expansion phase we associate with the Big Bang. Unlike models with a definitive origin point, the emergent universe avoids initial singularities and offers a framework in which space, time, and energy gradually give rise to the dynamic cosmos observed today.

## The Conformal Cyclic Cosmology

Cyclic models (or oscillating models) refer to several cosmological models in which the universe follows infinite, or indefinite, self-sustaining cycles.

The Conformal Cyclic Cosmology (CCC) is a theory proposed by physicist Roger Penrose, suggesting that the universe undergoes infinite cycles, or "aeons," each beginning with a Big Bang and ending in a smooth, empty state. In this model, the end of one universe becomes the beginning of the next through a conformal transformation, which stretches the geometry of spacetime so that the infinitely expanded future of one aeon aligns with the dense beginning of the next. Roger Penrose and others have attempted to find empirical support for CCC, such as patterns in the cosmic microwave background (CMB) that might hint at events from previous aeons. However, these claims remain controversial and have not yet gained widespread acceptance, but they continue to spark debate and research, as CCC challenges traditional notions of time and thermodynamics, proposing a continuous, cyclical universe without a true beginning or end.

## Theories of Time

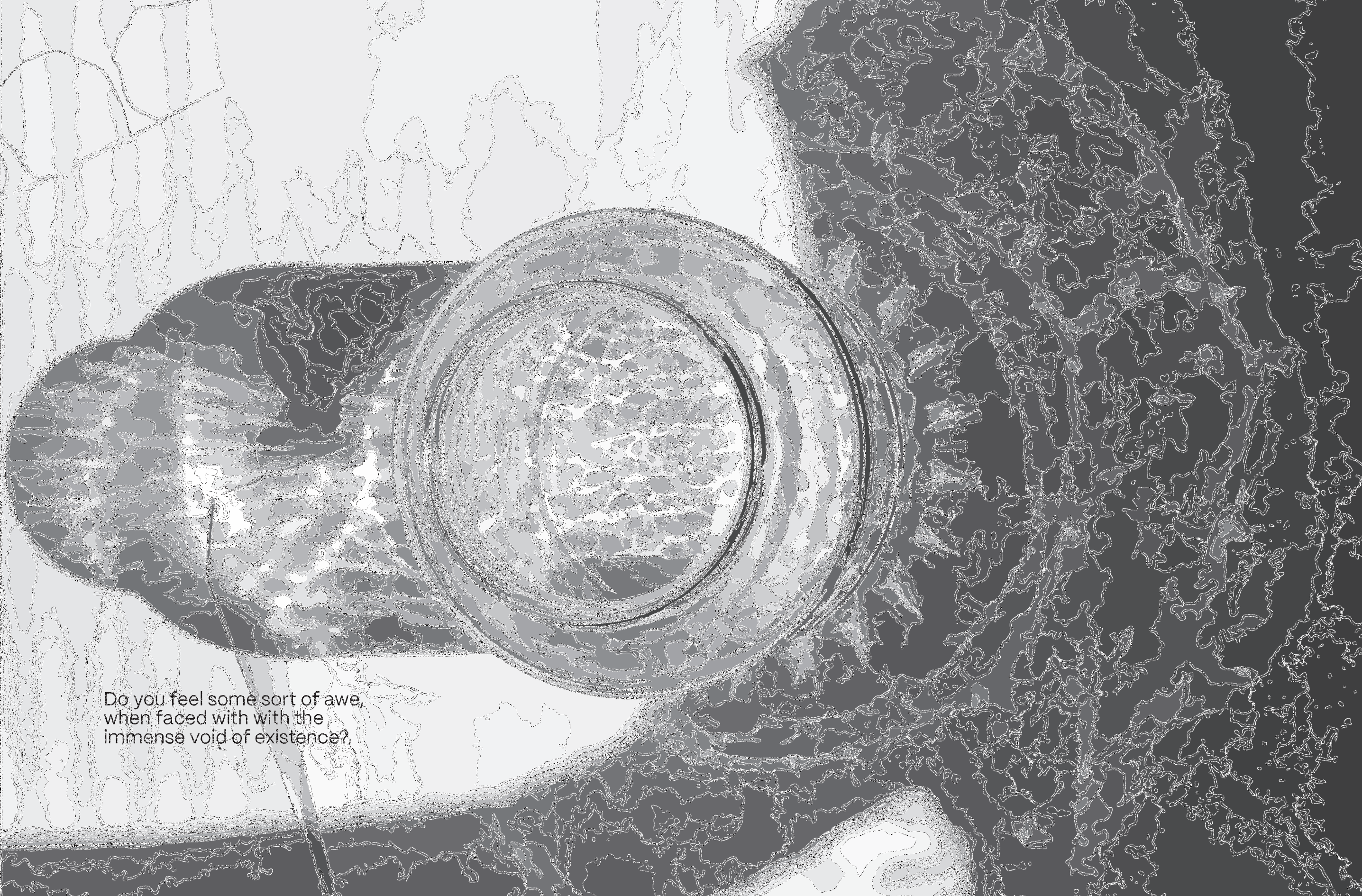
**Presentism** is the view that only the present moment is real. According to this perspective, the past no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist—only present events and entities are ontologically real. This view aligns with our everyday experience of time as a flow, where the "now" constantly changes, and it often ties into tensed theories of time, where the distinction between past, present, and future is fundamental.

**Eternalism**, by contrast, holds that all points in time—past, present, and future—are equally real. In this "block universe" view, time is seen more like space: just as all places exist simultaneously in space, all moments in time exist simultaneously in a four-dimensional spacetime. This theory is supported by the framework of Einstein's theory of relativity and suggests that temporal passage is a subjective experience rather than a fundamental feature of reality.

## Entropy

Entropy as the Arrow of Time refers to the concept that the direction of time is determined by the increase of entropy, or disorder, in a system. In thermodynamics, entropy is a measure of the number of possible configurations a system can have, and it tends to increase over time in isolated systems, according to the second law of thermodynamics. This increase in entropy gives time a distinct direction: it progresses from states of low entropy (order) to states of high entropy (disorder). The "arrow of time" is a metaphor for this one-way progression of time from the past (lower entropy) to the future (higher entropy). In other words, the flow of time is marked by the irreversible tendency of systems to move towards greater disorder or equilibrium, which is linked to the concept of entropy. This view provides a natural, physical explanation for why time appears to move forward, as opposed to backward.





Do you feel some sort of awe,  
when faced with with the  
immense void of existence?



The inexplicable  
fascination for  
existence





I am alive and conscious,  
and this simple  
prerequisite brings me so  
many questions, so much  
confusion and dizziness  
in this strange reality.

Is there some  
purpose to be found in  
being doomed to ask  
ourselves answerless  
questions? And why are we  
so obsessed with this idea  
of finding purpose in things,  
assuming things cannot  
simply 'be'.

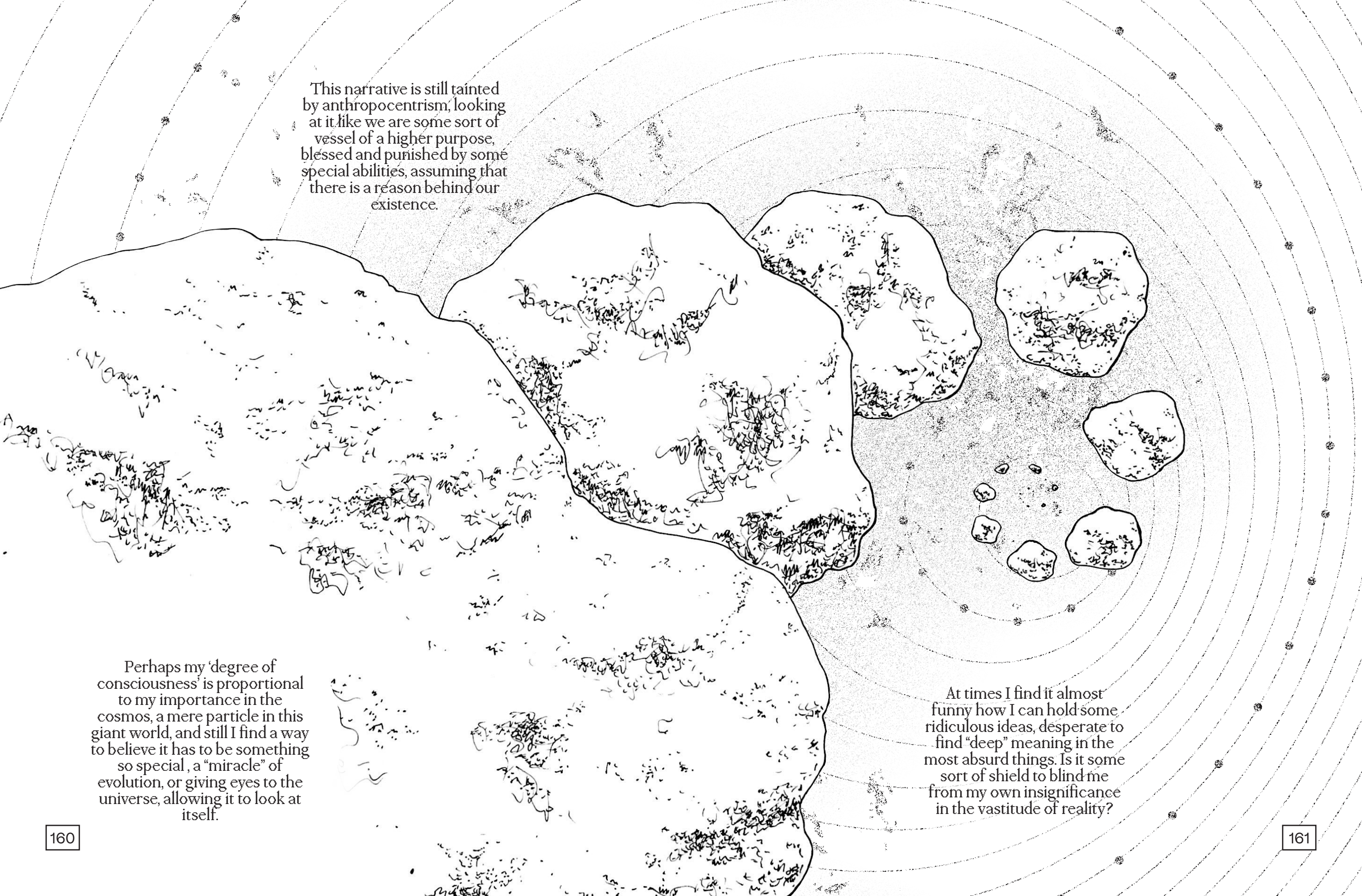
Reflecting on our own  
nature, our own existence,  
our own mortality, so  
ephemeral in the grand  
timeline of this universe,  
seems like an inescapable  
consequence of being  
conscious, and it's hard to  
not ask ourselves, for what?



Sometimes I ask  
myself, with that weight  
of existence, so intense to  
carry, why are we gifted  
the ability to feel? In a  
world filled with violence  
and suffering, what is the  
point of sentence?

Are we certain the joys  
of life compensate for the  
horrors some beings go  
through? Or perhaps I am  
too fragile for this world,  
struggling to face the simple  
act of being.





This narrative is still tainted  
by anthropocentrism, looking  
at it like we are some sort of  
vessel of a higher purpose,  
blessed and punished by some  
special abilities, assuming that  
there is a reason behind our  
existence.

Perhaps my 'degree of  
consciousness' is proportional  
to my importance in the  
cosmos, a mere particle in this  
giant world, and still I find a way  
to believe it has to be something  
so special, a "miracle" of  
evolution, or giving eyes to the  
universe, allowing it to look at  
itself.

At times I find it almost  
funny how I can hold some  
ridiculous ideas, desperate to  
find "deep" meaning in the  
most absurd things. Is it some  
sort of shield to blind me  
from my own insignificance  
in the vastitude of reality?



It makes me wonder, if  
belief, and the narratives  
we create for ourselves are  
a tool we need to face the  
existential dread that comes  
with existing?

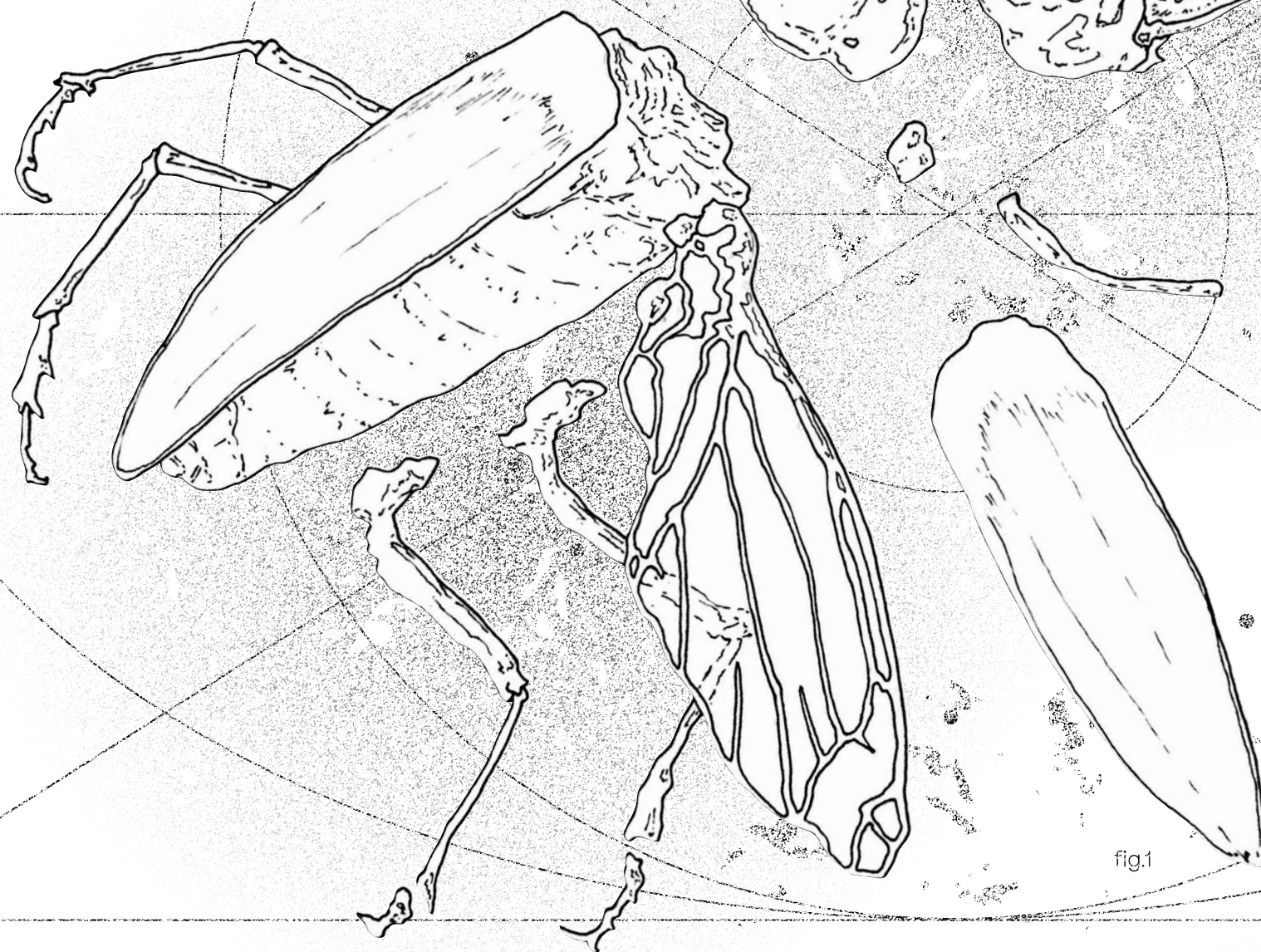


fig.1

Perhaps the desire to believe in  
something bigger is more than a  
social construct, but an inherent  
aspect of conscious agents. Perhaps  
stories become a necessity when  
one acquires consciousness. Is  
there a necessary drive to keep  
going, making our desire for  
meaning innate, rather than  
extrinsic?



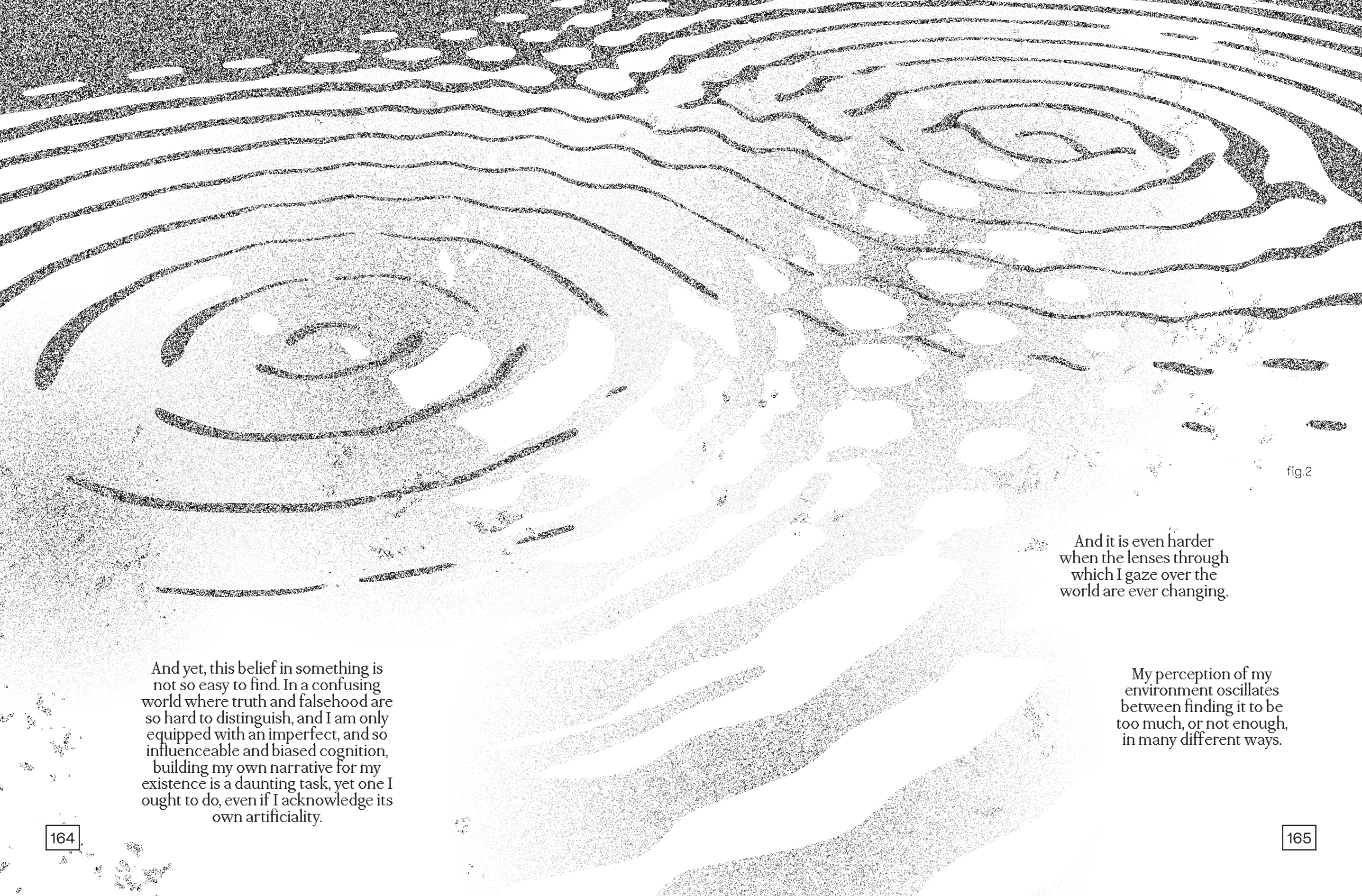


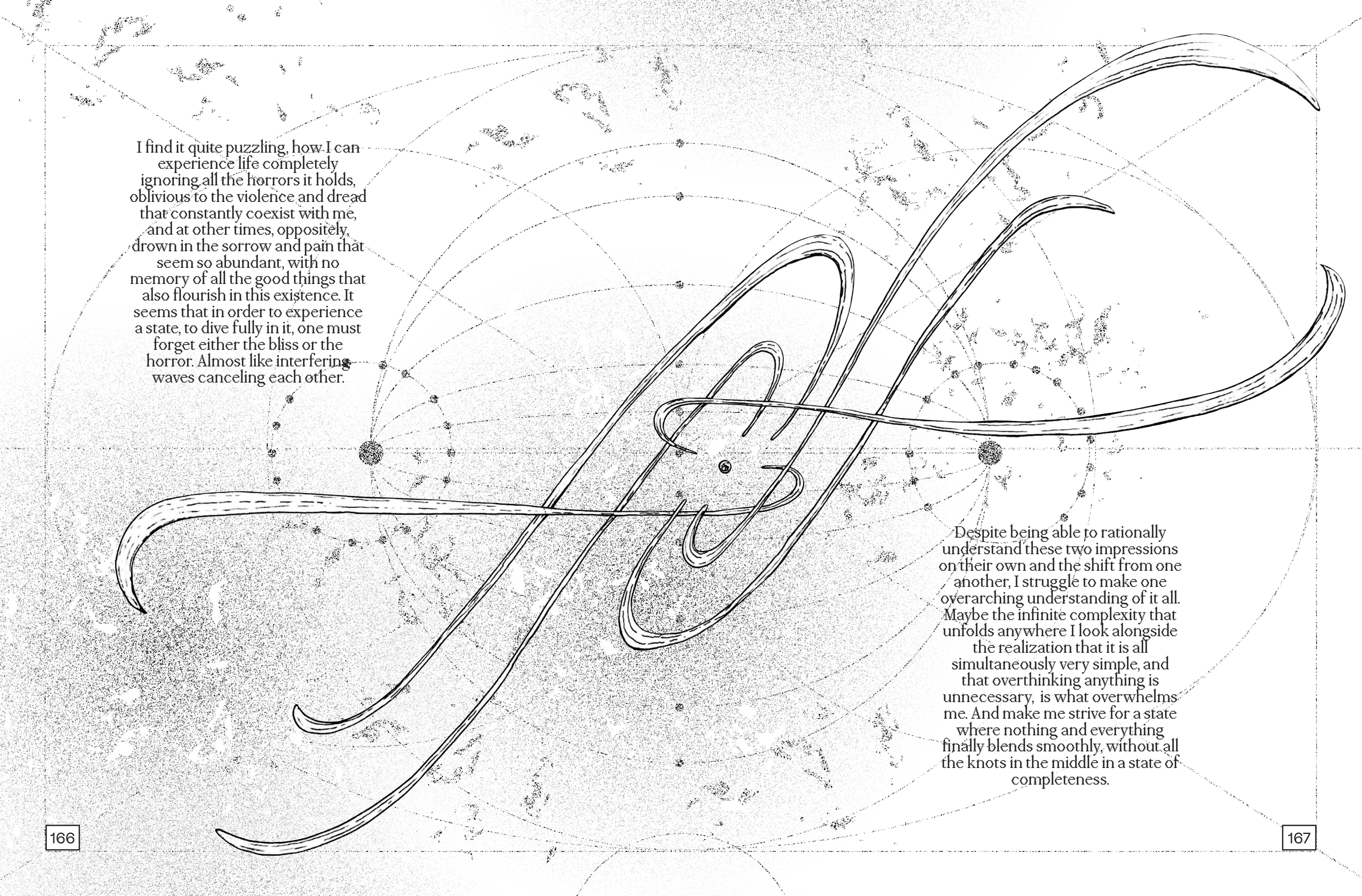
fig.2

And yet, this belief in something is not so easy to find. In a confusing world where truth and falsehood are so hard to distinguish, and I am only equipped with an imperfect, and so influenceable and biased cognition, building my own narrative for my existence is a daunting task, yet one I ought to do, even if I acknowledge its own artificiality.

And it is even harder when the lenses through which I gaze over the world are ever changing.

My perception of my environment oscillates between finding it to be too much, or not enough, in many different ways.

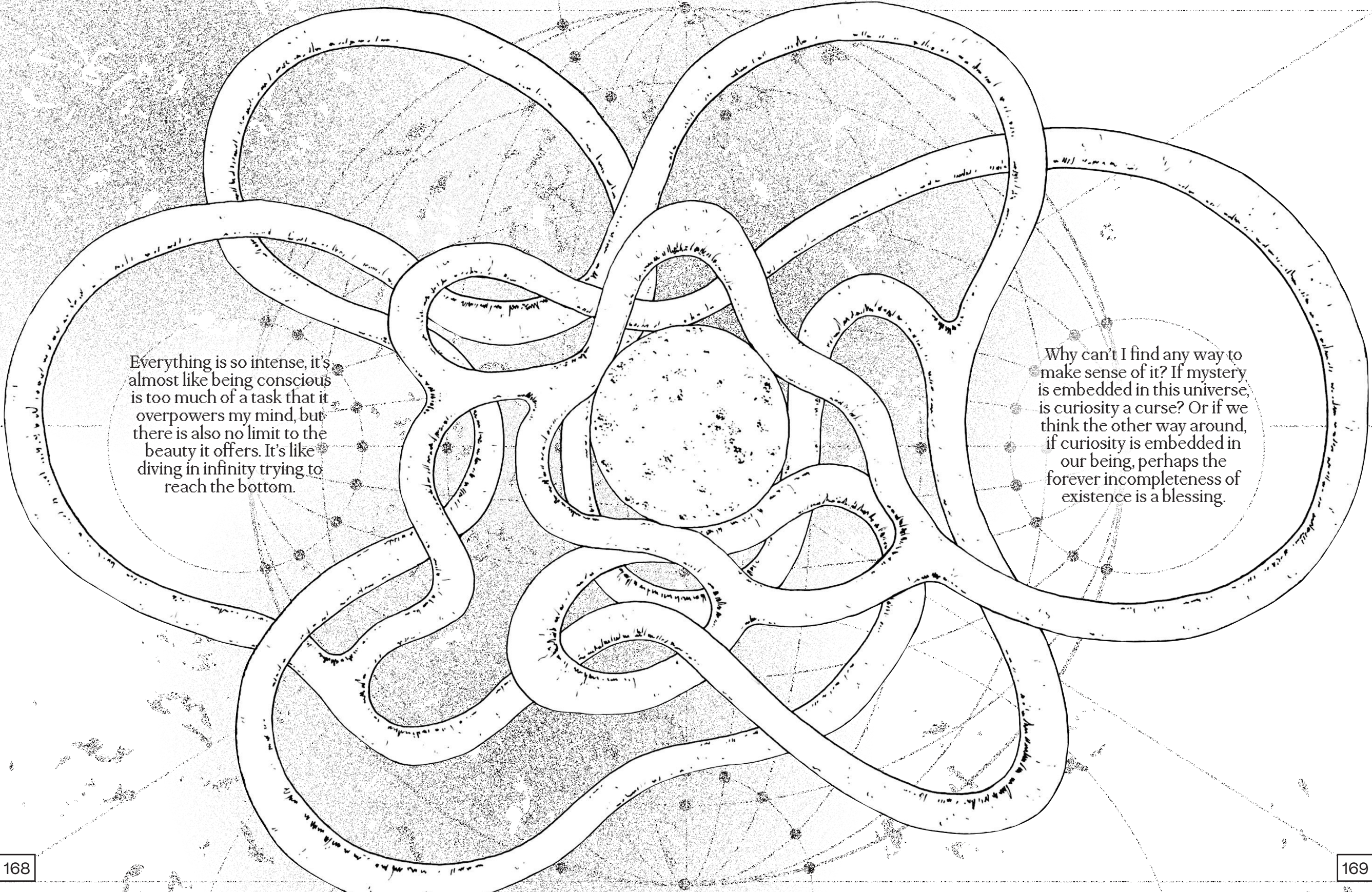




I find it quite puzzling, how I can  
experience life completely  
ignoring all the horrors it holds,  
oblivious to the violence and dread  
that constantly coexist with me,  
and at other times, oppositely,  
drown in the sorrow and pain that  
seem so abundant, with no  
memory of all the good things that  
also flourish in this existence. It  
seems that in order to experience  
a state, to dive fully in it, one must  
forget either the bliss or the  
horror. Almost like interfering  
waves canceling each other.

Despite being able to rationally  
understand these two impressions  
on their own and the shift from one  
another, I struggle to make one  
overarching understanding of it all.  
Maybe the infinite complexity that  
unfolds anywhere I look alongside  
the realization that it is all  
simultaneously very simple, and  
that overthinking anything is  
unnecessary, is what overwhelms  
me. And make me strive for a state  
where nothing and everything  
finally blends smoothly, without all  
the knots in the middle in a state of  
completeness.

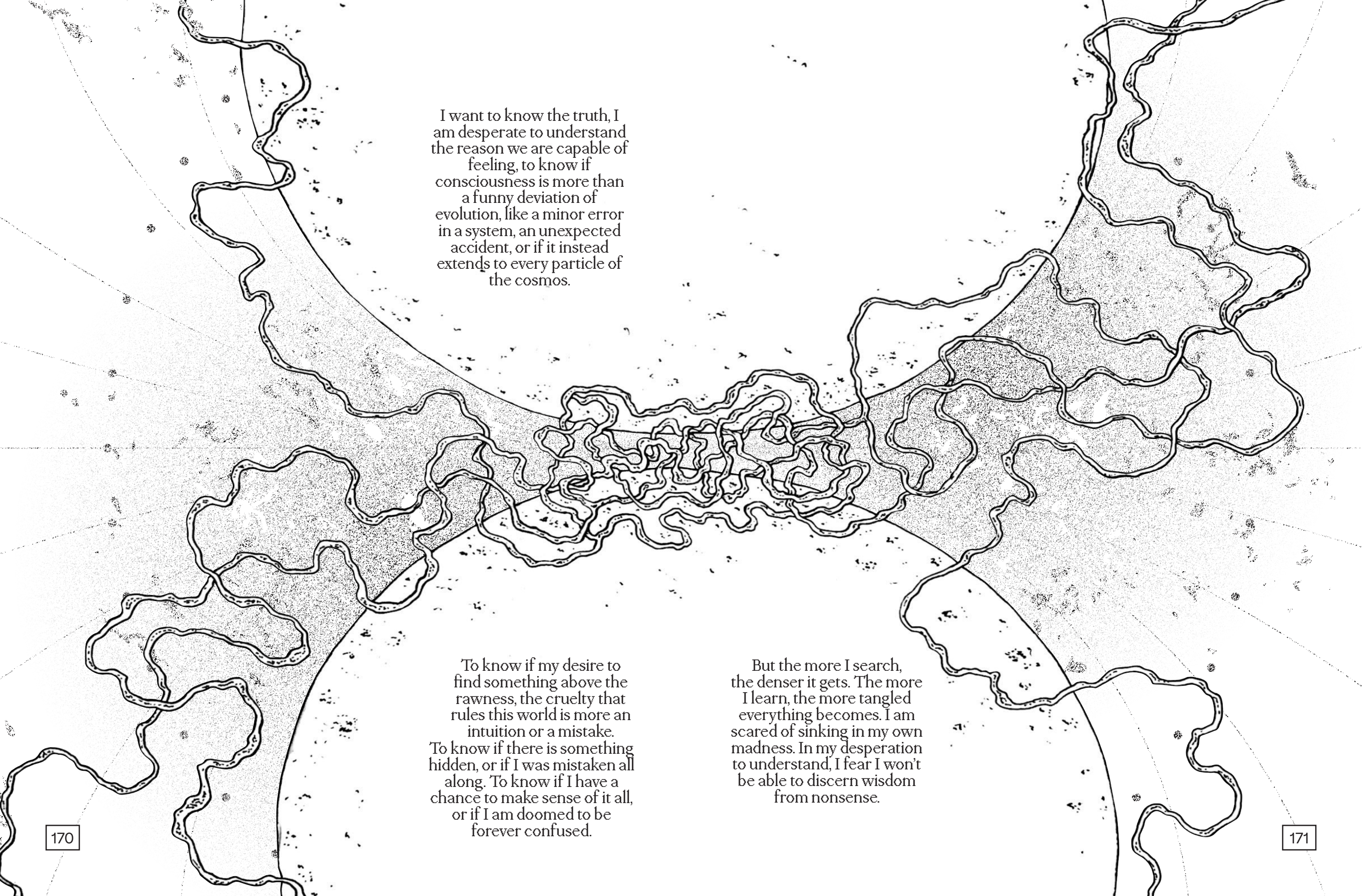




Everything is so intense, it's almost like being conscious is too much of a task that it overpowers my mind, but there is also no limit to the beauty it offers. It's like diving in infinity trying to reach the bottom.

Why can't I find any way to make sense of it? If mystery is embedded in this universe, is curiosity a curse? Or if we think the other way around, if curiosity is embedded in our being, perhaps the forever incompleteness of existence is a blessing.



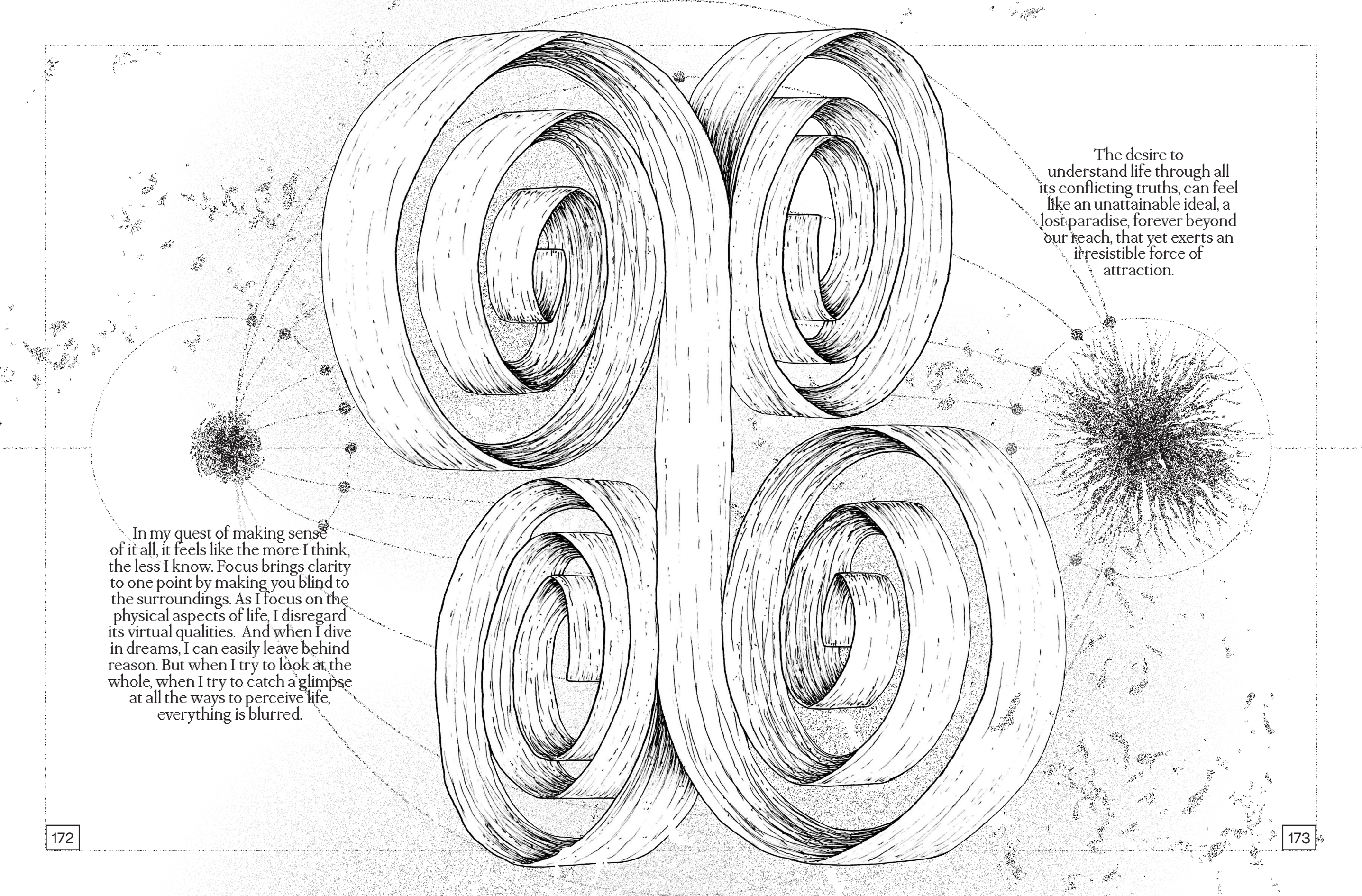


I want to know the truth, I  
am desperate to understand  
the reason we are capable of  
feeling, to know if  
consciousness is more than  
a funny deviation of  
evolution, like a minor error  
in a system, an unexpected  
accident, or if it instead  
extends to every particle of  
the cosmos.

To know if my desire to  
find something above the  
rawness, the cruelty that  
rules this world is more an  
intuition or a mistake.  
To know if there is something  
hidden, or if I was mistaken all  
along. To know if I have a  
chance to make sense of it all,  
or if I am doomed to be  
forever confused.

But the more I search,  
the denser it gets. The more  
I learn, the more tangled  
everything becomes. I am  
scared of sinking in my own  
madness. In my desperation  
to understand, I fear I won't  
be able to discern wisdom  
from nonsense.

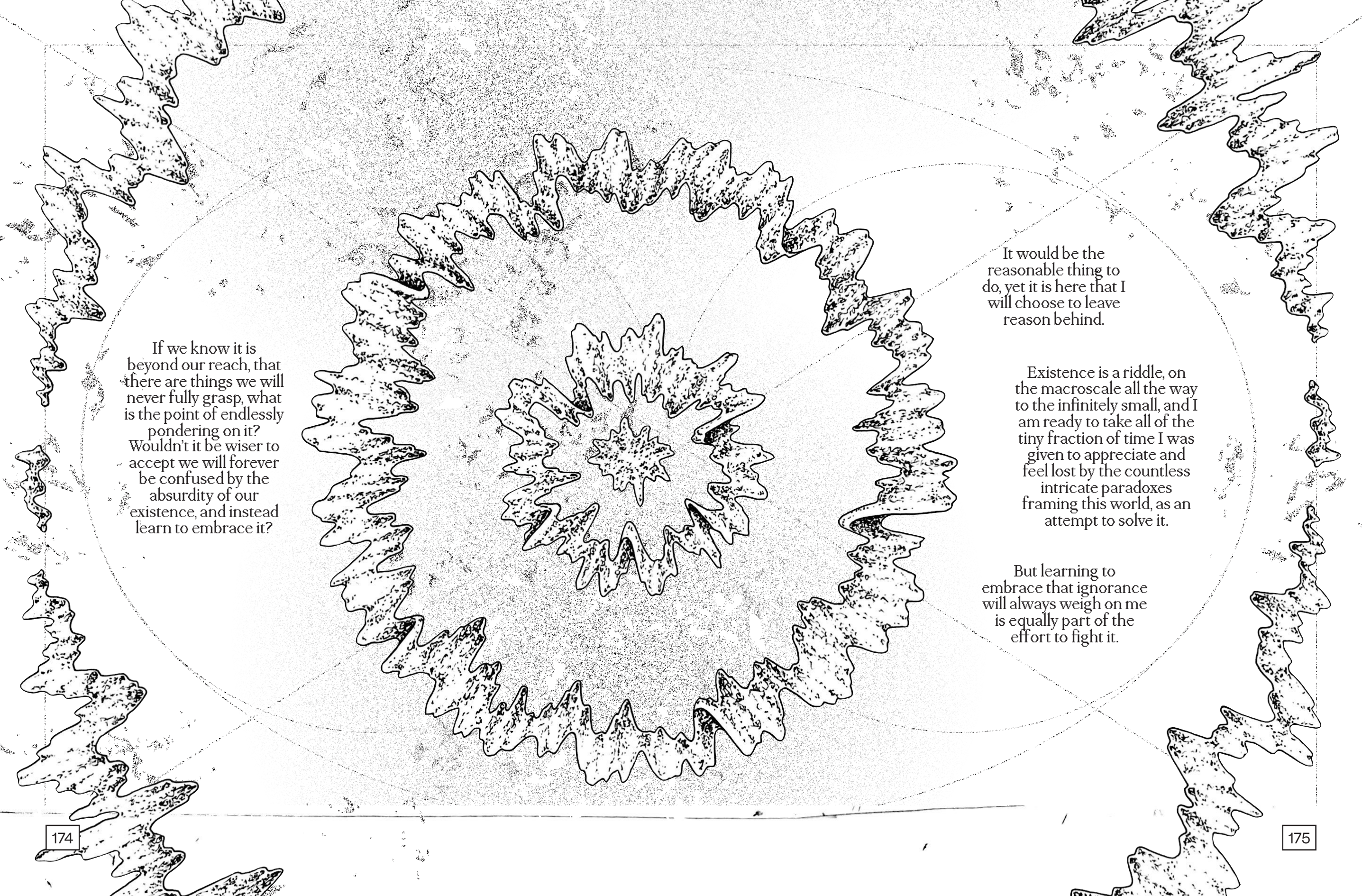




In my quest of making sense of it all, it feels like the more I think, the less I know. Focus brings clarity to one point by making you blind to the surroundings. As I focus on the physical aspects of life, I disregard its virtual qualities. And when I dive in dreams, I can easily leave behind reason. But when I try to look at the whole, when I try to catch a glimpse at all the ways to perceive life, everything is blurred.

The desire to understand life through all its conflicting truths, can feel like an unattainable ideal, a lost paradise, forever beyond our reach, that yet exerts an irresistible force of attraction.





If we know it is beyond our reach, that there are things we will never fully grasp, what is the point of endlessly pondering on it? Wouldn't it be wiser to accept we will forever be confused by the absurdity of our existence, and instead learn to embrace it?

It would be the reasonable thing to do, yet it is here that I will choose to leave reason behind.

Existence is a riddle, on the macroscale all the way to the infinitely small, and I am ready to take all of the tiny fraction of time I was given to appreciate and feel lost by the countless intricate paradoxes framing this world, as an attempt to solve it.

But learning to embrace that ignorance will always weigh on me is equally part of the effort to fight it.



There seems to be something with living things, between dissatisfaction and curiosity, some kind of obstination that pushes us to constantly seek more.

Painfully stubborn we are, even if it causes us so much trouble! The peace of acceptance is right in front of our eyes, yet it's so hard to gaze away from the infinite horizon.

Isn't it funny how we sometimes refuse to acknowledge something, out of a desire to understand something too big for ourselves?



Is this insatiable hunger  
for more a vice of the  
modern man's mind, or  
a quality inherent to  
conscious agents within  
this universe? In other  
words, by chance or by  
design? Even if the  
design could also be in  
itself a result of chance.



So much confusion  
for such a silly thing.  
I see I'm running in a  
circle, spinning from the  
absurdity of wanting to  
understand something  
that cannot be grasped.  
But being aware that it's  
foolish isn't enough to  
make me stop.



I find that there is something quite magical in this obstination. And that it is a counter force to the doom I can sometimes feel.

Like weed can grow out of concrete, like a hunger for life.

And I believe that some magic resides in this inexplicable fascination for existence, that has pushed humanity further throughout history.

There is something so ancient and majestic in being transcended by the brutal poetry of life.

It almost feels like a transe, absorbing all the infinity that passes through me. A mere traveler I may be, my desire for discovery is a worship of existence.

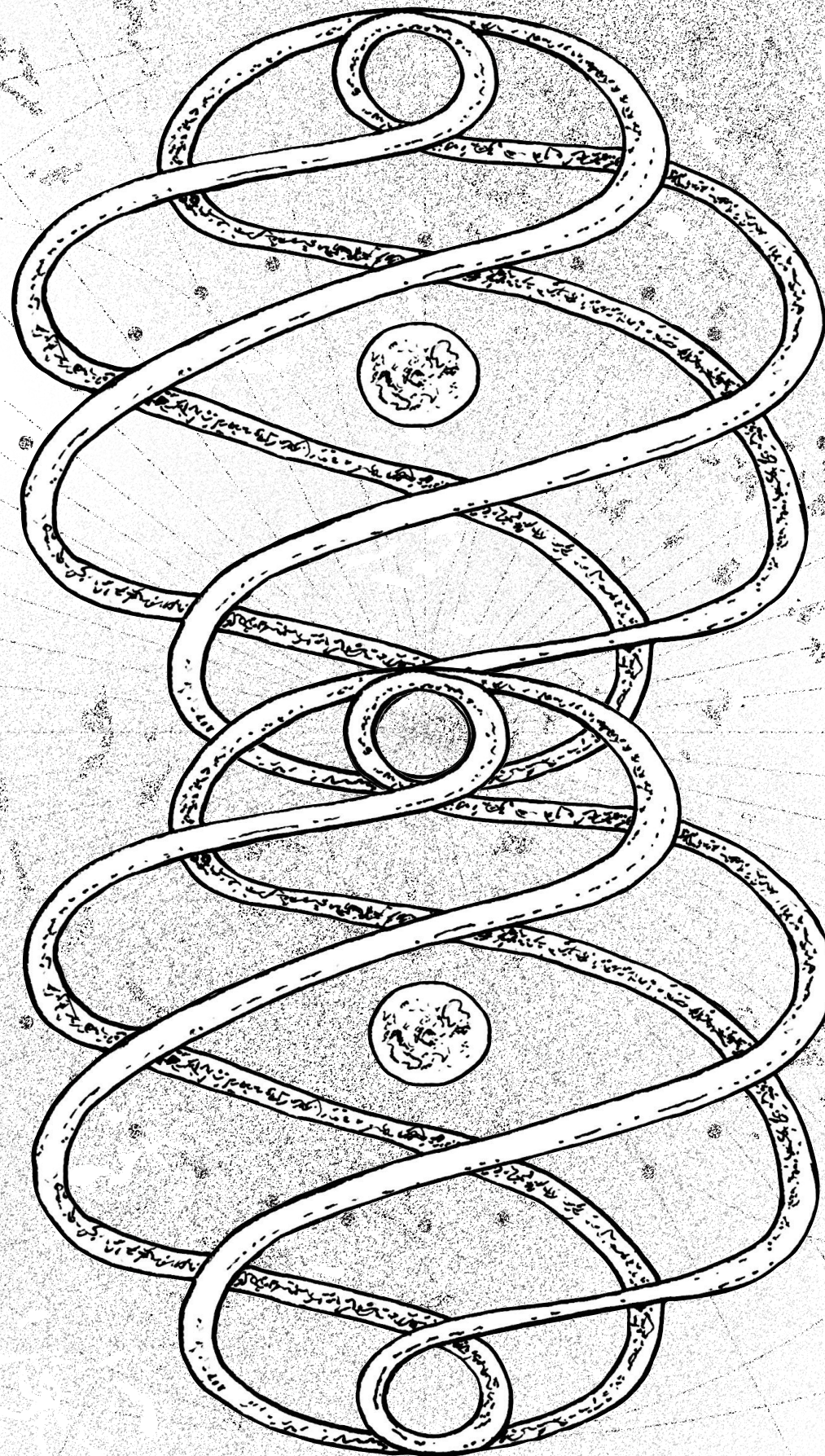
Abandoned to freedom, left with our desires to relate our existence to grand narratives in a world that doesn't hold any, I must find passion and accept the madness that comes with it.

I now embrace dreams and fantasy as an essential part of my reality, instead of running away from it, as I finally understood I cannot part with them like I cannot part with my own self.



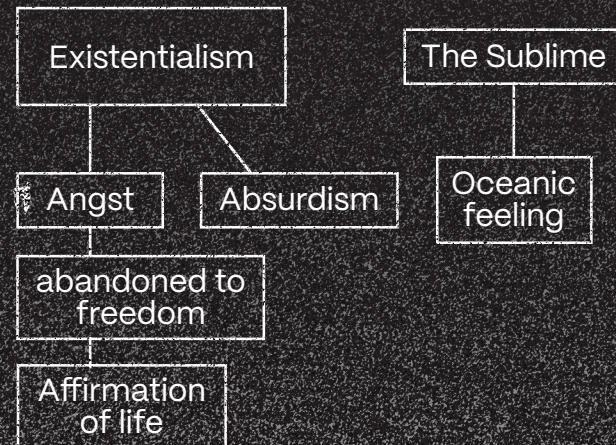
I hope to find the  
courage to love the world  
as much as I can, in all its  
shapes, all its nuances, all  
its paradoxes, through all its  
beauty and horrors.

I will not be naive, and yet  
not scared to dream, refusing  
to let a fear of irrationality  
blind me from all it has to  
unfold. My head spins like the  
earth, language isn't good  
enough to describe how it feels,  
It's like a sense of awe that  
defies comprehension.





# Appendix



## Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes individual freedom, subjective experience, and the inherent meaninglessness of life, asserting that humans must create their own meaning and values in an indifferent universe. Arising primarily in the 19th and 20th centuries, with key figures such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. It rejects the idea of a predetermined essence or purpose for human beings, instead arguing that "existence precedes essence" !!! add that sartres puts it!!! —that individuals define themselves through their actions and decisions. Despite its often somber tone, existentialism can be seen as a call to embrace personal responsibility and live authentically in the face of uncertainty.

## Angst

Also translated as "existential anxiety" or "dread"—Angst is a disturbing emotional experience that arises when an individual confronts the freedom, uncertainty, and isolation inherent in human existence. Unlike ordinary fear, which is directed at something specific, angst is a more abstract, unsettling awareness of the groundlessness of life: the realization that there are no absolute values, no preordained purpose, and that each person is radically free to shape their own essence through choices and actions. For Søren Kierkegaard, angst emerges from the dizzying realization of one's potential to choose and to become—a kind of spiritual vertigo, while Martin Heidegger describes it as a mood in which the world loses its familiar meanings, revealing the sheer "nothingness" that underlies our existence. For many existentialists, embracing this anxiety is essential—as it can lead to authenticity, self-awareness, and a more honest engagement with life.



Fig.1

Exoskeletons are hard, protective outer shells found on insects and other arthropods. Made mostly of a tough substance called chitin, they provide support, protect internal organs, and prevent water loss. Unlike bones inside the body, exoskeletons cover the outside and must be shed and replaced as the insect grows.



Fig.2

Interfering waves occur when two or more waves meet and combine as they travel through the same space. Depending on how their peaks and troughs align, they can either strengthen each other (constructive interference) or cancel each other out (destructive interference). This interaction creates patterns of varying intensity, like the ripples seen when stones are dropped into water.



## Abandoned to freedom

The burden of choice refers to the profound responsibility that comes with human freedom. As existentialist thinkers argue that there is no predetermined essence or divine plan guiding our lives, individuals are seen as radically free to define themselves through their actions. This freedom, however, is not liberating in a simplistic sense; it comes with the heavy weight of having to choose in the absence of objective values or external justification. Without a fixed moral framework or universal truths, every decision becomes a matter of personal responsibility, and individuals must confront the anxiety of potentially making the "wrong" choice. Sartre famously put it, we are "condemned to be free"—we did not choose to be born, but once we are, we must take full ownership of our existence.

## Affirmation of life

Through the concept of Amor Fati (love of fate), Nietzsche describes his philosophical stance of embracing life in all its dimensions—suffering, chaos, and uncertainty included—rather than rejecting or escaping it. Central to this is his idea of the "eternal recurrence," a thought experiment asking whether one would be willing to relive their life infinitely, in exactly the same way. The affirmation of life means saying "yes" to this prospect, accepting existence as it is, without appeal to transcendent meaning or moral absolutes. It is however not about welcoming all its components, but to embrace it as a whole, despite loathing some of its elements. Instead of trying to find meaning in suffering, rather to accept its necessity.

Nietzsche contrasted this with life-denying philosophies, which he saw in religious asceticism or nihilism. Instead, he called for the creation of new values, grounded in vitality and creativity—a stance embodied in his ideal of the Übermensch (Overman), who fully embraces life's flux and becomes the author of their own existence.

## Absurdism

Absurdism is a philosophical perspective that explores the conflict between the human desire for meaning, order, or purpose in life and the apparent silence of the universe. At the heart of absurdism is the recognition that while individuals naturally seek significance, the universe offers no clear answers or inherent meaning—this tension gives rise to the "absurd." The term is most closely associated with Albert Camus, who argued that this confrontation between our search and the world's indifference does not require despair, but rather invites a lucid acceptance of absurdity. In works like *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus suggests that acknowledging the absurd condition can lead to a form of liberation, where one embraces life with defiant joy, despite its lack of ultimate meaning.

In his philosophical essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus uses the Greek myth of Sisyphus, condemned to endlessly roll a boulder up a hill only for it to roll back down each time he reaches the summit, as a metaphor for the human condition. Despite the futility of the task, he famously concludes that "one must imagine Sisyphus happy" as a defiant embrace of the meaninglessness of life and a form of liberation. Rather than resort to nihilism or suicide, he argues for an acceptance of the absurd and a life lived with full awareness and passionate engagement, even in the face of its inherent lack of ultimate purpose.



## The Sublime

Often associated with overwhelming greatness, vastness or intensity, the sublime is a philosophical and aesthetic concept that refers to experiences of awe, wonder, and even fear, sometimes beyond comprehension. Unlike beauty, which is typically associated with harmony and pleasure, the sublime confronts the mind with something immense or powerful, such as violent storms, or the infinite cosmos. Philosophers like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant explored the sublime: Burke emphasized its emotional impact, especially the feeling of terror at a safe distance, while Kant linked it to the mind's ability to transcend sensory limits and grasp ideas of infinity and moral grandeur. The sublime thus lies at the intersection of aesthetics, emotion, and reason, revealing both the limits and the potential of human perception and imagination.

## The oceanic feeling

In a letter to Sigmund Freud, writer Romain Rolland referred to a profound sense of boundless unity and connectedness with the universe as the "oceanic feeling"—an experience often described as spiritual or mystical, a feeling of eternity, limitlessness, and dissolution of the ego. Although Freud acknowledged the phenomenon, he interpreted it psychologically as a regression to infantile consciousness, or "primitive ego-feeling". For Rolland, however, the oceanic feeling was not pathological but a legitimate and deeply human experience that captures a sense of oneness with existence, often invoked in religious or contemplative contexts.



## Afterword

This book is a collection of personal reflections and questions, exploring the feeling of nausea that arises from existing with a conscious mind. Through an auto-ethnographic and auto-theoretical approach, I examined in this work how my perception of the world mirrors my understanding of self and being – by recognising our own internal structures in the patterns observed in nature, drawing parallels between what lies outside and within. Delving into feelings of confusion and dizziness using both visual and verbal language, here the images hold equal importance to words.

Each chapter is followed by an appendix that expands on concepts or branches of philosophy indirectly referenced in the text, and information about some illustrations, offering further context to the themes explored throughout the book.





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